The Workplace Writing Experiences of EAL (English as an Additional Language) Professionals: Five Case Studies

by

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Chair of Examining Committee	Dr. Bill Hunter
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The above committee determined that the thesis is acceptable in form and content and that a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by the thesis was demonstrated by the candidate during an oral examination. A signed copy of the Certificate of Approval is available from the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

ABSTRACT

A review of the literature on English second language (L2) writing skills reveals a need for more research on the workplace writing experiences of L2 professionals employed in English as an Additional Language (EAL) contexts. Through a case study approach involving a semi-structured interview, a think-aloud activity, and a questionnaire, this study gathered qualitative and quantitative data with the aim of gaining insight into the workplace writing practices, challenges, and strategies of five EAL professionals with developing workplace writing skills, employed in Toronto, Canada. The data were initially analyzed using a thematic analysis technique and further explored to identify interconnecting themes associated with the development of L2 workplace writing skills. Three factors were identified as influential in the development of the participants' workplace writing skills: motivation, awareness of the role of self, and awareness of the role of others.

Keywords: ESL; second language acquisition; workplace writing; workplace learning

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis consists of original work which I have authored. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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CHERYL JOHN

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication. I have used standard referencing practices to acknowledge ideas, research techniques, or other materials that belong to others. Furthermore, I hereby certify that I am the sole source of the creative works and/or inventive knowledge described in this thesis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AT	Activity Theory
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CELPIP	Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmarks
CofP	Communities of Practice
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ELT	Enhanced Language Training (similar to OSLT, below)
ESL	English as a Second Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IEP	Internationally Educated Professional
L1	First Language (native language/mother tongue)
L2	Second or Additional Language
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
OSLT	Occupation-specific Language Training
RQ	Research Question
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TA	Think-aloud Activity
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

1 Introduction

"It is an indisputable fact that use and dependence on the written word is increasing at an extraordinary rate but that does not mean we—educators, employers, workers—have got any better at thinking about what it means to learn to do all the different kinds of writing we have to do in the different settings and times of our lives."

(Davies & Birbili, 2000, p. 430)

For decades, the literature on written communication in English workspaces has revealed concerns about the quality of writing produced by first language (L1) and second language (L2) writers (Davies & Birbili, 2000; Knoch et al., 2016: Lentz, 2013). There are many reasons for these concerns. Writing errors have the potential to harm an organization's image (Beason, 2001; Gubala et al., 2020; Hu & Hoare, 2017). Writing errors can lead to business-to-business and business-to-consumer misunderstandings, sometimes causing costly delays or jeopardizing profits (Du, 2020; Knoch et al., 2016). For instance, missing or misplaced commas have cost companies millions of dollars (Stokel-Walker, 2018); moreover, a survey of 547 U.S. business writers found that billions of dollars were being wasted yearly by employees' efforts to understand poorly written material (Bernoff, 2016a, 2016b). Writing errors may have legal implications (Davies & Birbili, 2000; Knoch et al., 2016), or cause accidents or injury (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Duff et al., 2000; Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Knoch et al., 2016; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999). Accurate writing is particularly critical in professions such as law, accounting, engineering, and IT, where a misplaced decimal, a misplaced word, or the wrong choice of words or units of measurement can cause serious misunderstanding. In health care professions where workers change shifts constantly and rely heavily on the

documentation of other staff, the misuse of abbreviations or terminology, the incorrect name on a patient's report, or the wrong doses of medication, among other errors, can jeopardize the health and safety of vulnerable persons. Writing errors can also raise doubts about the competence of an employee, create a negative impression, and possibly hamper opportunities for advancement (Beason, 2001; Gubala et al., 2020; Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Hu & Hoare, 2017; Wolfe et al., 2016). For example, employees with strong written communication skills were more likely to avoid being dismissed during the early 21st century economic crisis in Greece (Machili, 2014).

Considering all of the above, it is clearly in the best interest of all employees to develop the ability to communicate effectively in writing for work-related purposes, but this may pose challenges for L2 professionals in English as an Additional Language (EAL) contexts. Concerning such workers, Li (2000) explained:

> …for L2 speakers, the process of language socialization in the workplace involves double socialization: often, they are novices in the new working environment—which may be in a different field from their prior training and experience—and they are novices in the new language and culture. (p. 62)

In spite of these challenges, employers generally hold the same expectations for all workers, regardless of language ability (Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Hu & Hoare, 2017).

To provide some insight as to workplace integration issues typically encountered by L2 professionals in EAL contexts, the following sections will present the Canadian context in which this study is situated, starting with a discussion of some pertinent issues related to linguistic diversity and English language proficiency in Canada. This

introduction will then conclude with a positioning of the researcher in relation to the study, followed by an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Linguistic Diversity in Canada

Notwithstanding the numerous Indigenous communities that have long existed in Canada, this nation has been known as a country of immigrants. The 2016 Canadian Census reported a population of over 35 million people. 21.9% were foreign-born, and 26% of immigrants outside Quebec (where French is the official language) reported English as their mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2017). Moreover, 72.5% of Canadian immigrants claimed a language other than English or French (Canada's official languages) as their mother tongue, and more than half of immigrants nationwide indicated that they regularly spoke one of Canada's official languages at home (Statistics Canada, 2017). At the time of the 2016 Census, a total of 196 languages, comprising Indigenous, official, and immigrant languages, were spoken in Canada. Such linguistic diversity implies many cultural differences and the potential for settlement and integration challenges. As suggested by Vertovec (2007, 2010), efforts to address increasing *super-diversity* in migrant-receiving countries such as Canada tend to be "inadequate and often inappropriate for dealing with individual immigrants' needs or understanding the dynamics of their inclusion or exclusion" (Vertovec, 2010, p. 172) . The authors of a report on the labour market outcomes of Canadian immigrants stated,

> Time since landing is a major determinant of immigrants' labour market performance. In particular, very recent immigrants (who have been in the country for five years or less) face a number of hurdles in the labour market, such as a

> lack of language proficiency, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, inadequate familiarity with the Canadian labour market, as well as other challenges. (Yssaad & Fields, 2018, p.6)

The previously mentioned challenges related to the socio-economic integration of immigrants are well-known in public and scholarly discourse and have been documented by others, including Drolet et al. (2014), Government of Canada (2015), Kaushik and Drolet (2018), Roberts (2010), Weiner (2008), and Zietsma (2010). While all of the factors play a role in the integration of immigrants in the Canadian workforce, it is necessary to highlight the matter of English language proficiency, which is most relevant to this study.

1.2 English Proficiency in Canada

Proficiency in one of Canada's official languages (English or French), or a lack thereof, is a major factor in the effective economic integration of immigrants (Derwing & Waugh, 2012; Gibb, 2015; Roberts, 2010; Weiner, 2008). Since the latter decades of the 20th century, there has been considerable debate concerning definitions of language competency, especially with regard to the use of English. One of the earliest reflections on this issue was put forth by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who wrote,

> Language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge, but also an instrument of power. A person speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished. Hence the full definition of competence as the right to speech, i.e., to the legitimate language, the authorized language which is also the language of authority. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 648)

Bourdieu observed that, among his linguist peers, “legitimate discourse” (in spoken or written form) was generally defined by a number of characteristics, including utterance by a “legitimate speaker” in a “legitimate situation,” addressed to “legitimate receivers,” and “formulated in the legitimate phonological and syntactic forms (what linguists call grammaticalness)” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 650). Norton Peirce (1995) wrote, “What is considered appropriate usage is not self-evident but must be understood with reference to relations of power between interlocutors” (p. 18). The question as to whose English qualifies as “legitimate,” is particularly pertinent to the metropolises of countries such as Canada, where the migration of L1 speakers of different Englishes, along with numbers of highly competent L2 speakers of English, have resulted in multilingual workspaces; yet, “the dominant language of the nation state produces and enforces a linguistic capital that serves to maintain and reproduce linguistic and ethnic inequalities” (Roberts, 2010, p. 216). The question of legitimate language is not restricted to English, however, but applies to every language: “The expectation that someone should always aspire to native speaker competence when learning a foreign language is under challenge, as is the notion of ‘native speaker’ itself (Graddol, 2004, p. 1330).

Bourdieu’s (1977) musings—inspired, it seems, by sociology’s inability to “free itself from all the more or less subtle forms of domination which linguistics and its concepts still exert over the social sciences” (p. 645)—have been largely instrumental in problematizing the matter of native versus non-native language users and laying the groundwork for discussions that continue to this day (e.g., Gibb, 2015; Graddol, 2004; Norton Peirce, 1995). As a result of such discussions in both public and scholarly discourse, references to native and non-native speakers of English and other languages

are typically approached with care. Rampton (1990), for example, preferred the term *expert user* rather than native speaker to define "accomplished users" of English, for the reason that "the notion of expert shifts the emphasis from 'who you are' to 'what you know'" (pp. 98-99).

Readers will notice that this paper contains occasional references to non-native speakers of English, especially in the recruitment stages of my research (e.g., participants' consent materials), as well as references to English as a Second Language (ESL), English as an Additional Language (EAL), or L2 professionals. Occasionally, I also refer to internationally educated professionals (IEPs) or internationally trained professionals. In all instances, the above terms should be understood to mean persons for whom English is not a first language and who are progressing towards skilled or proficient use of English for workplace writing purposes (see the brief discussion of *repertoires*, below). Furthermore, despite the fact that the term ESL is still used in parts of Canada in reference to adult English language learning programs, I have opted instead for the term English as an Additional Language (EAL), which acknowledges the multilingualism of many learners of English (Webster & Lu, 2012).

In this discussion of language proficiency, another matter must be considered, namely *repertoires*, a term used in sociolinguistics to describe the various ways in which people know a language and are able to use it to fulfill different purposes (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). Having determined that language learners can display varying degrees of competence across registers (i.e., formal versus informal use of language) and across receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills, Blommaert and Backus (2013) maintained:

> It is clear that work on communication in superdiverse environments is not well served with a priori notions of 'language', 'community', or 'understanding', but must proceed from observations of actual usage, and that it must allow for tremendous variability in observation and interpretation. (p. 14)

Thus, second language acquisition (SLA) researchers must now consider not only *whose* English qualifies as legitimate, but when speaking in terms of competence, *which* English (Blommaert & Backus, 2013).

Increased awareness of and sensitivity to language proficiency issues have not necessarily resulted in changes to the tools used to assess the language abilities of newcomers to Canada. In Canada, English assessment tools consist primarily of i) the competency-based Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), used to place English and French learners in provincially or federally funded ESL, LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), FSL (French as a Second Language), and occupation-specific language training programs (OSLT and ELT, i.e., Enhanced Language Training); and ii) high stakes tests such as the Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (https://www.celpip.ca/) and the International English Language Testing System (https://ielts.ca/), used for immigration, professional designation, citizenship, and admission to postsecondary programs. According to Gibb (2015), since the early 2000s, the use of high stakes tests by employers and regulatory boards for employment purposes has been viewed by some stakeholders as problematic, even unethical: "The one-size-fits-all module of language testing represented by language tests such as IELTS, may not provide employers and professional associations with the occupation-specific information they need to adequately determine workplace readiness" (Arkoudis et al., 2009, p. 38).

Despite the fact that these assessment practices "have become a central element of administrative and bureaucratic apparatuses all over the world, and [that] they operate with exceptional power in fields such as education, labour and migration," Blommaert and Backus (2013) contended that in terms of their ability to assess actual language competences, "such measuring instruments are a form of science fiction" (p. 30). Gibb (2015) concurred that assessing language competence "in isolation from the social relations and social practices that constitute professional practice" was "unlikely to present an accurate representation of immigrant professionals' knowledge and their ability to communicate in the daily routines of professional practice" (p. 262). Nonetheless, in the absence of other means of assessing job candidates' ability to communicate effectively for work-related purposes, employers and other stakeholders in Canada generally defer to the CLB and high stakes tests. For this reason, occupation-specific tests, such as the recently designed Occupational English Test (https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/), have been developed to assess the employment readiness of ESL healthcare professionals in a number of countries (Knoch et al., 2015). Similarly, the Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses (https://www.celbancentre.ca/) focuses on the ability of internationally educated nurses to demonstrate their knowledge of conventional form filling and the requirements of narrative medical reports (Baldwin & Cheng, 2020).

For the purpose of this study, it is interesting to note that discussions on legitimate uses of language have focused almost exclusively on speaking, and very rarely on writing (Blommaert, 2013; Lillis & McKinney, 2013). However, that tendency has recently begun to change as sociolinguists increasingly realize that writing can no longer be

overlooked if a more comprehensive sociolinguistics is to be built, especially as digital communication raises greater concerns about and interest in writing than ever before (Blommaert, 2013; Lillis & McKinney, 2013). Perhaps not surprisingly, this realization has resulted in a problematization of "the dominant lenses through which writing is understood and analyzed" (Lillis & McKinney, 2013, p. 415), leading to debates surrounding longstanding, normative positions on writing. For instance, "'writing' [tends to get] positioned as 'standard' even in arguments where 'non-standard' spoken language is being positively evaluated" (Lillis & McKinney, 2013, p. 426). Hence, one might assume that after decades of discussion on what counts as legitimate speech, we have only just begun to consider what counts as "proper" writing. It is difficult to imagine what the outcome of such discussion will be, for if written communication is to achieve its aim, especially for work-related purposes, it would seem that some standards would need to be upheld.

1.3 Personal Context

As a Canadian-born woman of colour, a "second-generation" Canadian (which one of the participants in this study questioned, wondering in what generation one earns the right to self-identify simply as a Canadian) whose parents emigrated to Canada from the Caribbean, I can relate to feeling like an illegitimate speaker in different spheres of my life. At first meeting, assumptions may be made about my nationality, my native language, and more; and in many spheres of my life, I have felt as if I needed to earn the right to speak. The notion of legitimacy transcends language; it applies as well to socioeconomic class, ethnicity, nationality, ways of learning, gender, age, faith, housing status, and more. It is possible to meet the standards of speech that are considered

legitimate by a dominant group, and yet fail to be viewed as a legitimate member of the same group for other reasons. At times, my ability to process and produce language has been hampered to some degree, due to an injury in early childhood. This has its implications, even for an L1 speaker. As a result, I have encountered many L2 speakers who have been able to communicate their thoughts, in speech and sometimes in writing too, with greater facility than I have ever done. Nevertheless, I believe that this has made me better able to empathize with the communication challenges faced by others. I am convinced that the notion of legitimacy, in terms of language and otherwise, is one we will grapple with indefinitely since it is human practice to classify and group things and people according to certain characteristics that they share in common. At the very minimum, however, a healthy awareness of others' struggles to be in this life, is a good start, and it is certainly noble to desire to correct the injustices in our midst, as long as such efforts do not lead to overcorrections that result in other inequities.

With respect to my language learning experiences, I grew up in Montreal, Quebec, where, in the English public schools I attended, I learned the basics of "authentic" French, taught by teachers of European varieties of French; yet, the most dominant French spoken beyond school walls was a variety of Quebec French. As I was raised in a predominantly English community, communicating in French outside the classroom presented some challenges during my postsecondary years and beyond, when employment in retail, health care, financial services, and administrative roles sometimes required oral and, to a lesser extent, written French. Based on my childhood experiences learning French and observations of FSL education in Canada today, there remains a sense of a "better French" or "good French," even as some Canadian employers, in their

job advertisements, specify the need for employees who speak "Canadian French" or "Quebec French." Hence, though certain inroads may have been made in the rethinking of legitimacy in terms of English, I am not sure that this can be said for all languages.

My interest in the workplace writing experiences of English L2 professionals was largely inspired by my experience providing English language instruction and pre-employment services and training in occupation-specific and other government-funded language training and settlement programs. In Canada, all such programs that provide training opportunities for newcomers tend to include a component focused on Canadian workplace culture. Multiple times, with various groups of internationally educated professionals (IEPs) under my instruction, I had my clients view "Integrating Talent" (Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, 2011), a video about a fictional IEP's socialization into a Canadian workplace. Two brief scenes in the video alluded to potential workplace writing challenges for L2 professionals employed in EAL contexts. A series of videos produced by the same organization heightened my consciousness as to other potential challenges that await IEPs generally. These and similar resources further inspired my interest in the topic of this study. Finally, the personal conviction that writing is possibly one of the most difficult skills to master for many, regardless of language proficiency, has caused me to ponder for some time how L2 professionals with developing workplace writing skills cope with workplace writing tasks in English work settings.

1.4 Thesis Outline

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 presents characteristics of 21st century workplace writing and the main findings of the literature review, with some

discussion of preparedness for workplace writing demands, key principles in the development of workplace writing skills, particular attention to workplace writing challenges of L2 professionals and strategies employed to effectively meet workplace writing expectations, and the limitations in the literature; Chapter 3 presents the design philosophy for the study, the data collection methods, and the data analysis procedures; Chapter 4 presents the case study findings and the results of the qualitative data analyses; Chapter 5 reviews the findings of the data analysis in light of the literature review; and Chapter 6, which concludes the thesis, presents pedagogical and workplace-based implications, as well as recommendations for future research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

The literature search aimed to identify studies on the workplace writing experiences of L2 professionals employed in English workspaces, specifically in English as an Additional Language (EAL) contexts, that is, in countries or regions where English is the dominant language, such as North America, the UK, and Australia. Because much of the literature on the workplace writing practices of L2 professionals originates from countries or regions where English is not the dominant language, I chose to expand my scope slightly to include several studies involving multinational companies and global work teams for which English was the primary language of operation. The search for literature generated 22 studies, ranging from 1998 to 2020. Despite the limited research in the targeted context, the selected studies provide insight into the workplace writing experiences of L2 professionals in English-dominant workspaces, particularly challenges faced and strategies employed to achieve work-related writing goals and develop workplace writing skills.

To establish a clear distinction between workplace writing and other forms of writing, this literature review first provides a description of 21st century workplace writing, a brief look at common genres of workplace writing in today's workplaces, and examples of technology use for work-related purposes. This will be followed by challenges associated with preparing learners in EAL contexts to meet workplace writing demands and key learning principles in the development of workplace writing skills. The literature review will then present the existing literature on the workplace writing

experiences of EAL writers, highlighting writing challenges and strategies. This will be followed by a discussion of the limitations in the literature.

2.2 The Nature of 21st Century Workplace Writing

Parks (2016) defined *workplace writing* as "writing done in a non-academic as opposed to an academic (or school) setting" and involving "both the processes of text production and textual products" (p. 223). Davies and Birbili (2000) further defined workplace writing as "the documents of various kinds that are instrumental in achieving the aims and ensuring the productivity of most organisations" (p. 432). In the 21st century, workplace writing is clearly distinguished from other genres of writing by references in the literature to such phenomena as globalization, the knowledge economy, the information age, restructuring of companies, and flattened hierarchies (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Davies & Birbili, 2000; Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd, 2012; Roberts, 2010). Unlike scholarly or scientific writing, for example, workplace writing is fluid and dynamic (Fraiberg, 2013; Machili, 2014); furthermore, workplace writing products and processes tend to vary among and even within organizations (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Apelman, 2010; Davies & Birbili, 2000), according to roles and levels of responsibility. As a result of such diversity in writing practices and texts, workplace writing is typically more unpredictable and less formulaic than other forms of writing. Davies and Birbili (2000) described workplace writing as "a highly demanding and complex mental activity":

> If we acknowledge the multiple cognitive operations needed to perform even apparently straightforward tasks such as writing down facts - which includes coping successfully with the mechanics of writing (handwriting or typing,

> spelling, grammar), speaking the language (and therefore expressing the values) of the organisation, satisfying the commitment demands of specific documents - then it becomes apparent that all acts of writing in work are potentially demanding. (p. 436)

To further complicate matters, advances in technology have blurred the lines between spoken and written communication, particularly with respect to computer-mediated communication such as email, web-chat, and instant messaging (Chun et al., 2016; Lockwood, 2017; Myles, 2009; Pihlaja, 2020).

Like other forms of writing, workplace writing is intertextual, that is, it tends to intertwine with other literacies (Blommaert, 2013; Fraiberg, 2013, 2018; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002). Bremner (2008) explained, "At the root of intertextuality is the idea that all texts are responses to other texts and that they are part of an ongoing dialogue, thus even the planning stage of the writing process involves the invoking of other textual resources" (p. 308). Thus, other literacies (e.g., prior verbal interactions such as telephone conversations or discussions during face-to-face or online meetings) may be drawn upon during the writing process. Workplace writing is also similar to other forms of writing in that it is multimodal (Chun et al., 2016; Fraiberg, 2013, 2018; Lillis & McKinney, 2013; Roberts, 2010): ideas may be expressed via various communications media or technologized modes such as music, images, and video (Chun et al., 2016; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002). Workplace writing is often collaborative (Artemeva, 1998; Parks, 2016); and within linguistically diverse organizations and work teams, some workplace writing practices may even be translingual, that is, carried out in more than one language (Alali, 2019; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Machili, 2014). Additionally, many workplace

writing practices allow relatively little time for planning and composing multiple drafts, especially when performed in fast-paced work settings. Louhiala-Salminen (2002) affirmed that, due to the fast-paced nature of 21st century work settings, today's professionals "have to be *literate* in the various, rapidly changing business situations where their reading, writing, listening and speaking simultaneously contribute to their actions and reactions in the daily routine" (p. 226),.

Not least of all, workplace writing is a social act (Du, 2020; Duff et al., 2000; Leki et al., 2008; Machili, 2014; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999). The general aim, like most other forms of writing, is to communicate ideas to others. However, on another level, the acquisition of workplace writing practices is often dependent upon the extent of interaction with one's colleagues. The literature indicates that new employees who fail to leverage opportunities to interact with their more experienced peers, often do so to their professional detriment (Beaufort, 2000; Du, 2020).

Leki et al. (2008) surmised, "Perhaps because writing at the worksite is often avoidable, there is a scarcity of research in North America on the role writing plays for L2 workers and the development of writing skills among them" (p. 55). Contrary to this perception, however, the literature shows that advances in technology over the past few decades have made it almost impossible for most of today's workers to avoid writing (Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd, 2012). The following discussion on workplace writing genres attests to the abundance of writing in today's workplaces.

2.2.1 Genres of Workplace Writing

As mentioned earlier, the nature of workplace writing has evolved over the past few decades due to phenomena such as globalization, the knowledge economy, the

information age, restructuring of companies, and flattened hierarchies (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd, 2012; Roberts, 2010). Yet, many genres of written communication have not changed. The literature indicates that, depending on their occupation and level of responsibility, employees may still be required to write meeting minutes, memos, reports, proposals, and letters. In more specialized fields, genres tend to be more occupation-specific, as in the cases of engineers (Du, 2020; Knoch et al. 2016), accounting professionals (Knoch et al., 2016), IT professionals (Fraiberg, 2013, 2018), healthcare professionals (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Duff et al., 2000; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999), legal professionals (Hartig & Lu, 2014), and educators (Faez, 2010).

The most notable change in the past few decades, perhaps, driven by advances in technology, has been the proliferation in communication via email, rather than by fax or postal delivery. With the advent of the internet and rapid changes in technology, a multitude of electronic devices and digital tools are now used to communicate in writing. As well, there are countless options for processing, presenting, and delivering written text. Although handwritten notes are still composed from time to time, the written communication in today's workspaces is largely technology-driven and text-based.

2.2.2 Technology Use

This section examines some of the ways in which technology is used for writing in today's workspaces. In the literature selected for this review, minimal attention is paid to the role of technology in writing for work-related purposes, perhaps because this has become the norm. While some attention is given to the use of email (e.g., Alali, 2019; Du, 2020; Machili, 2014; Myles, 2009) and templates (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Machili, 2014), there are only occasional passing references to instant messaging,

assorted software (for presentations, word-processing and occupation-specific tasks), search engines, message boards, Tweets, wikis, electronic translation tools, and online dictionaries (e.g., Alali, 2019; Apelman, 2010; Du, 2020; Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd, 2012; Knoch et al., 2016). Few rich illustrations are provided concerning the use of digital tools to perform workplace writing tasks. However, four studies stand out in terms of their focus on the use of technology by L2 professionals for workplace writing purposes in EAL contexts or English-dominant workspaces. These studies, discussed in some detail below, illustrate the dynamic, complex nature of workplace writing in some of today's workspaces; as well, they provide examples of intertextual, multimodal, collaborative, and social aspects of 21st century writing.

Pihlaja (2020) analyzed the written digital communication between some of the staff members at two small, binational manufacturing companies located on the U.S.-Mexico border. Along with phone, email, and fax, cloud-based tools like Google Docs had been used by the staff until advances in smartphone technology allowed for increased data sharing, at which point the digital messaging tool WhatsApp became one of the primary means of communication. According to WhatsApp Inc. (2020), this popular communication tool "offers simple, secure, reliable messaging and calling, available on phones all over the world" and "supports sending and receiving a variety of media: text, photos, videos, documents, and location, as well as voice calls" (https://www.whatsapp.com/about/).

In this particular study (Pihlaja, 2020), WhatsApp was used "seemingly ad hoc and idiosyncratically," by individual employees to "navigate and negotiate the challenging physical, legal, and economic environment on the [U.S./Mexico] border" (p.

259). Three WhatsApp groups had been created to facilitate business-to-customer communication and intracompany/intercompany coordination among administrative, export/import, and production employees at the two companies featured in the study. Most of the communication via WhatsApp involved texting for customer relations and supervisory purposes. In addition to interviewing and observing five employees, Pihlaja was permitted access to two of the WhatsApp groups.

As the study was being conducted on work sites, there were limitations as to how much Pihlaja was permitted to observe. Despite certain restrictions, however, he found that, while there are often reasonable explanations for the lapses in communication that are typical of digital tools like WhatsApp, people sometimes misinterpreted the voids or silences and arrived at less than accurate explanations for delayed responses, especially in intercultural exchanges. Pihlaja observed that, because it has become a universal practice for people to carry their smartphones on their person, recipients are typically expected to respond immediately. When they fail to do so, message senders are not quite certain what to think or how to respond, especially when communicating cross-culturally. Chun et al. (2016) explained, "New technologies require new negotiations of interactional time frame conventions, and these negotiations are not necessarily universal but more likely to be particular to an institution or group or even an individual" (p. 67). Pihlaja cautioned users of asynchronous messaging tools like WhatsApp to be aware of the potential for reducing people "to an essentialist other, especially the further from us they seem culturally" (p. 274).

In another study, Lockwood (2017) examined the web-chat communication practices of Filipino contact centre agents at an American company based in Manila. Her

study was timely, given that outsourcing had become a common practice (Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd, 2012). To explore the nature of synchronous web-chat exchanges, including any linguistic difficulties and the potential for negative impact on the business, Lockwood (2017) looked at authentic web-chat texts, interviewed a manager, and recorded the discussions of two small focus groups of experienced and recently hired contact agents. She compared templates used in web-chat exchanges to those used in traditional call centres. The main purpose of such tools was to prevent periods of silence. Unfortunately, however, agents usually had very little time to ascertain customers' needs in order to select an appropriate script or template because conversations were often fast-paced. Web-chat communication was found to present some unique challenges for this reason, and even more so because the agents were expected to engage in multiple chats simultaneously. Managers considered the templates to be helpful and encouraged their use, but the agents found them too lengthy and felt that they sounded unnatural. An examination of some of the web-chat exchanges revealed misunderstandings of customers' needs as well as problems with template use, leading Lockwood (2017) to recommend ways to improve web-chat communication in businesses of this type. She also concluded that due to its unique features, web-chat could not be treated merely as another form of written or spoken communication.

Web-chat communication is an example of a contemporary workplace writing task that is fluid and dynamic (Fraiberg, 2013) and allows little time for planning (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002). Chun et al. (2016) observed, "One of the traditional hallmarks of writing was that it afforded greater processing time than speech did. But in the age of electronic communication, this is not always the case" (p. 67).

Two studies of an Israeli high-tech company offer another illustration of the complexity of 21st century workplace writing practices (Fraiberg 2013, 2018). The author conducted a six-month ethnographic study during which he gathered data via field notes, interviews, text collection, and audio and video recordings of workplace activities carried out by Hebrew-speaking employees who were highly proficient in English. He also examined the use of a wide range of tools, digital and otherwise, that were typically involved in the workplace writing processes at the company, e.g., sticky notes, whiteboard text, social networking tools, online dictionaries, translation apps and templates, email, chats, face-to-face and virtual consultations with on-site and U.S.-based colleagues. Fraiberg (2013) observed how one employee made skilful use of all of these tools as she worked with a team to construct an online poll, and he documented how the various tools were used in the execution of other workplace writing projects.

Fraiberg (2018) also analyzed design sketches, handwritten notes from meetings, and text messages; in addition, he observed body language, recorded verbal exchanges, and interviewed the CEO of the company. He concluded that the multimodal nature of 21st century workplace writing calls for approaches to writing instruction that take into account the interaction of digital and human resources that is typical of today's workplace writing practices.

The studies above illustrate perhaps the greatest challenge in conducting research on workplace writing in contemporary workspaces, and possibly explain the limited literature in this area of L2 writing (Leki et al., 2008; Parks, 2016). To truly understand how individuals engage with technology in the execution of workplace writing tasks,

some degree of observation is required, but for confidentiality reasons, it can be difficult to find willing individuals and employers to participate in such research (Roberts, 2010).

The experiences above may not reflect those of the average employee, L2 or otherwise. Nevertheless, it is probable that without a fairly high level of proficiency, learners of any language would find some of these work environments intimidating and stressful due to possible language-based, culturally-based, and social challenges that will be discussed later. L2 professionals who at least have the technological skills to navigate the 21st century workplace should find themselves at an advantage, in all sectors (Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd, 2012).

Having shown how workplace writing differs from other forms of professional writing, particularly research-oriented writing, and having discussed various genres of workplace writing as well as the use of technology for workplace writing purposes, it is appropriate to consider the preparation of L2 learners for workplace writing tasks and the ways in which workplace writing skills are developed. This background will be helpful later in understanding some of the challenges experienced and strategies employed by five EAL professionals in relation to their workplace writing practices.

2.3 Preparation for Workplace Writing

For various reasons, both L1 and L2 employees often find themselves underprepared to fulfill workplace writing expectations to the satisfaction of employers (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Davies & Birbili, 2000; Knoch et al., 2016). With regard to interns and new graduates, some studies suggest that discipline-specific, tertiary instruction in English-speaking and other countries provides minimal training in real-life workplace writing practices; rather, such instruction emphasizes writing for academic purposes and

assesses written assignments almost exclusively for content knowledge or "demonstration of learning" (Freedman & Adam, 1996, p. 411), offering little or no feedback on writing errors, which prevents students from developing their writing skills (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Hu & Hoare, 2017; Knoch et al., 2016: Kohn, 2015). Hu and Hoare (2017) reported that when EAL students struggled with written assignments, they usually sought assistance from university writing centres and private tutors, but in the absence of feedback from their professors, students cared very little about accuracy and clarity in their writing and continued to face difficulties writing accurately even after years of study. In addition to the emphasis on writing to demonstrate content knowledge, which applies to both L1 and L2 writers, there is considerable focus on preparing EAL students for high stakes general and academic English tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Knoch et al., 2016). Knoch et al. (2016) contended that "The complexity of written communication in the real world of work… appears to be reflected only in a very limited way in the written genres that undergraduates typically encounter in their assignments and coursework in university settings" (p. 7). Indeed, throughout the selected literature, references to the complexity of 21st century workplace writing are abundant.

A lack of adequate preparation places all job candidates at a disadvantage. As Leki et al. (2008) maintained, "all new employees, L1 or L2 English, experience a learning curve as they appropriate new disciplinary and institutional genres; the difference between the two groups in this regard is primarily a matter of degree" (p. 54). The learning curve usually occurs because genres and learning processes in contexts of formal instruction differ from genres and learning processes in actual workplaces

(Freedman & Adam, 1996), as will be discussed in the following section on the development of workplace writing skills.

Some employers and recruitment agencies consider written communication skills to be essential (Alali, 2019; Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Knoch et al., 2016), and may even require candidates to complete a written test as part of the hiring process (Arkoudis et al., 2009). These tests may range from informal assessments like writing "a fresh CV" at the employer's site (Arkoudis et al., 2009, p. 126) to more formal assessment tools such as the IELTS (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Knoch et al., 2016).

Although some of the literature reviewed for the purpose of this project suggests that faculty at institutions of higher learning have generally not been very effective at teaching for transfer to real-life writing practices (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Knoch et al., 2016), Artemeva (2009) countered that it is possible "to teach domain-specific communication strategies apart from the local contexts, and that such teaching, if carefully constructed and theoretically grounded, can serve as *one* of the ingredients of professional genre knowledge" (p. 172). Nevertheless, across almost all of the occupational sectors represented in the literature, L2 professionals generally felt inadequately equipped for the realities of workplace writing (e.g., Alali, 2019; Apelman, 2010; Bremner, 2012; Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Machili, 2014).

2.4 The Development of Workplace Writing Skills

Regarding the development of workplace writing skills, several key principles of learning are repeatedly highlighted throughout the literature. These principles are briefly discussed below.

As stated previously, workplace writing is a social act on a number of levels. Firstly, its main purpose is to communicate ideas to others. On another level, the development of workplace writing skills is influenced somewhat by the degree to which novice employees interact with and learn from their more experienced peers (Beaufort, 2000; Roberts, 2010). Additionally, writing is occasionally a collaborative activity. As a result of these realities, the literature is saturated with real-life examples of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) that illustrate the ways in which the oral and written communication skills of L2 professionals benefit from social interaction with proficient speakers of English in English-dominant workspaces (e.g., Bremner, 2012; Du, 2020; Duff et al., 2000; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999). The literature also offers occasional glimpses of the ways in which the development of these skills can be hindered due to a lack of such interaction.

Duff and Talmy (2011) explained that "L2 socialization addresses the manifold complexities of children or adults with already developed repertories of linguistic, discursive, and cultural practices as they encounter new ones"(p. 97). In contrast to L1 socialization, however, Duff and Talmy (2011) maintained that L2 speakers are not always as successful in their efforts to integrate into new communities, possibly due to resistance from others. Roberts (2010) focused exclusively on this learning principle in her article, "Language Socialization in the Workplace." Indeed, the substantial attention given to socialization in the second language acquisition (SLA) literature demonstrates the instrumental role that it plays in the development of workplace writing skills. For L2 professionals to acquire these essential communication skills, critical and sometimes uncomfortable decisions must be made regarding the extent to which they choose to

leverage the opportunities for socialization that are available to them in English workspaces. For example, to what degree do L2 professionals employed in such contexts take advantage of opportunities to learn from their more proficient peers? The literature provides examples of the positive and negative consequences of these choices (Bremner, 2012; Du, 2020; Duff et al., 2000; Machili, 2014; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999). For instance, in an employment and language training program that prepared Canadian immigrants to work as long-term health care aides, Duff et al. (2000) found that the English language skills of graduates and students completing their practicum benefitted immensely due to their active engagement with the residents and employees at the institutions where they worked. Conversely, Du (2020) reported that an avoidance of writing prevented U.S.-based, internationally trained engineers from participating in collaborative writing activities with more proficient English speakers, causing them to miss out on valuable opportunities to improve their writing skills and to develop social bonds with their peers.

Closely connected to socialization are the concepts of *communities of practice* (CofP) and *legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP) which relate to the theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). A CofP is a group of people who share common interests and actively engage in activities (practices) that enable them to achieve like-minded goals. LPP refers to the gradual, full integration of newcomers into a CofP as they interact with more experienced workers within that CofP. Like socialization, the notions of CofP and LPP are given significant attention with regard to the development of workplace writing skills (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Beaufort, 2000; Bremner, 2012; Freedman & Adam, 1996; Machili, 2014; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire,

1999; Roberts, 2010). For example, Beaufort (2000) found that new hires at a non-profit agency were assigned low-stakes writing tasks and given opportunities to observe experienced peers who planned and executed more complex tasks; furthermore, each employee contributed their unique expertise to collaborative writing projects. Referring to CofP and LPP, she observed that "There are multiple levels of participation, and different roles and levels of responsibility may be taken on simultaneously. Rather than a teacher-learner dyad, there is a rich set of relations: newcomer, old newcomer, old-timer, and so forth" (Beaufort, 2000, p. 190).

Another concept that receives attention is apprenticeship (Freedman & Adam, 1996), whereby more experienced individuals guide novice employees as they become acquainted with practices specific to a workplace (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Beaufort, 2000; Duff et al., 2000; Machili, 2014; Roberts, 2010). Tied to the notion of apprenticeship is Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) which, within the workplace context, refers to the scaffolding that novice employees receive as they learn workplace practices from their more knowledgeable peers (Beaufort, 2000; Bremner, 2012; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999).

Activity Theory (AT), which is also featured in the literature, has evolved four generations since its Vygotskyan (1978) origin. The third-generation version of AT, proposed by Engeström (1999), focuses on activity systems and expansive learning, especially with respect to work-related learning processes (Pihlaja, 2020). The basic premise of AT is that, motivated by a certain need, individuals make decisions about the most effective tools and resources to employ (digital or otherwise) and the most appropriate people to consult and collaborate with as a means to achieve their goal. Kohn

(2015) stated, “The concept of a discourse community frames writers as responding mainly to only one community, or simply gaining membership to a workplace culture. Yet writing, workplace writing in particular, may be contingent upon the needs of a variety of communities and cultures working collaboratively, in conflict, and with varying goals” (p. 174). Kohn (2015) further observed that the “*whys* and *hows*” of activity systems (workplace policies, procedures, and practices) typically cause “*disorientation*” for new employees (p. 176).

Regarding the first three generations of AT and the fourth-generation version focused on societal transformation, Engeström and Sannino (2020) pointed out some commonalities, namely,

> All of them see that work needs to be analyzed as object-oriented practice, mediated by instruments, and changing through its inherent contradictions. Work is to be understood in its constant development and transformations, making learning a central aspect of work. Transformative agency and willful action are of crucial importance in performing and shaping work. (pp. 2-3)

Finally, the concept of learning transfer (Brent, 2011; James, 2006), which refers to the effective application of formal learning to real-life situations, is also discussed in the literature, usually with regard to interns and new graduates (Knoch et al., 2016), and the transferability of formal training to real-life practices.

Having highlighted several learning principles relevant to the development of workplace writing skills, which should provide a helpful foundation for later discussions, I will now present the findings of the literature regarding some of the challenges

experienced and strategies employed by L2 professionals in EAL contexts, multinational companies, and global work teams.

2.5 Workplace Writing Challenges

Referring to changes in workplace writing practices due to globalization, flattened hierarchies, and advances in technology, Angouri and Harwood (2008) affirmed that one of the most significant challenges today is communicating ideas clearly in writing due to the different writing processes and genres of writing that can exist within one organization. Indeed, depending on the context, writers may need to make numerous decisions. They may need to choose a suitable channel of communication, make cautious and wise decisions about how to respond in a sensitive situation (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Machili, 2014), or make decisions about what to do when faced with periods of silence while communicating via digital messaging tools (Pihlaja, 2020). It may be necessary to consider how to address secondary audiences who will be copied in on an email or who may have a message forwarded to them which was initially intended for another recipient (Machili, 2014). In hierarchical work contexts, communication may be upward, downward, lateral, or any combination thereof, depending on the sender and the receiver of a particular message. Style, tone, and content must be given due consideration in each case (Machili, 2014). In more technical or specialized occupations, choices may have to be made regarding the use of general English, Business English, technical English, or even Plain English (Hartig & Lu, 2014). With non-technical genres such as minutes and emails that vary in tone, style, and register (level of formality), there are choices to be made as well, depending on the intended audience.

Certainly, many of the choices listed above are required of all writers; but for some L2 professionals, it may be somewhat overwhelming—even disheartening—to discover that, regardless of their level of formal education or eloquence in their L1, real-life workplace writing practices do not always allow them to benefit from that social capital. Some may find it somewhat reassuring to know that workplace writing presents challenges for almost all novice employees, including the most competent writers (Davies & Birbili, 2000; Knoch et al., 2016; Leki et al., 2008), and that it can become easier with experience and with increased familiarity with one's audience. Apart from the communication choices previously listed, some more specific workplace writing challenges include language-based, culturally-based, and social challenges. These will be discussed in the following sections.

2.5.1 Language-based Challenges

The literature indicates that minor errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and mechanics (e.g., punctuation) are generally tolerated by employers as long as the communicative purpose of the writing is achieved (Apelman, 2010; Hu & Hoare, 2017), and that such matters may present challenges even for L1 writers. Wolfe et al. (2016) indicated that when hiring, some employers were "more lenient with [L2] writers, stating that they 'cut some slack' or 'give a pass' to writers who make prototypical [L2] errors," while holding L1 professionals to a higher standard (Wolfe et al., 2016, p. 405). Wolfe et al. (2016) explained, "For these employers, [L2] errors are evidence of language learning rather than carelessness or laziness and thus are generally not judged as severely as errors made by native speakers" (p. 411).

Conciseness

Some L2 professionals experienced difficulties writing with conciseness, brevity, and clarity (Knoch et al., 2016; Du, 2020). For example, the U.S.-based, internationally trained engineers in one study often struggled to find a good balance between simple and more complex sentences, and redundancy was also an issue (Du, 2020).

Negative Transfer from L1 to L2

Another language-based challenge observed in the literature relates to the style of written texts. Du (2020), for example, observed that the coherence and organization difficulties experienced by the engineers in her study were primarily due to the transfer of literary writing practices from their L1 to English. Similarly, a U.S.-based French engineer in one study was required to adopt a less formal style and a different organization pattern to communicate more effectively with the readers for whom his writing was usually intended (Bausser, 2000). Also referring to the potential for negative transfer from L1 to L2 writing practices, Alali (2019) noted that professionals employed in multilingual, multicultural organizations in the Gulf countries were required to adopt western-style writing patterns. Negative transfer may also occur when words or expressions in one language cannot be literally translated into another.

Vocabulary Issues

The literature reveals that workers in various occupations faced challenges in written and other forms of communication as a result of linguistic gaps in general English vocabulary, or due to limited familiarity with occupation-specific terminology or jargon (Alali, 2019; Bremner, 2012; Du, 2020; Duff et al., 2000; Faez, 2010; Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Machili, 2014). When terminology was constantly being updated due to new

products and materials, this presented an even greater challenge (Alali, 2019; Machili, 2014).

2.5.2 Culturally-based Challenges

In the literature reviewed for this study, culturally-based issues generally relate to adapting to unfamiliar genres of writing, or modifying language or content to align with cultural norms. Roberts (2010) observed, "…in addition to the socialization processes that all new employees face, relative newcomers are expected to learn to participate in the linguistic and cultural practices of work in a new country" (p. 217). The literature reveals that reflective writing practices, awareness of audience and purpose for writing, and errors in tone were among the common culturally-based workplace writing challenges faced by L2 professionals in English workspaces. Reflective writing, particularly the ability to be self-critical, was observed to be challenging for internationally trained teacher candidates in Canada (Faez, 2010). Similarly, Du (2020) found that performance review reports requiring self-evaluation frequently posed difficulties for the U.S.-based engineers in her study. Also according to Du (2020), some engineers in her study consistently neglected to consider audience and purpose in performance review reports, presentation slides, and daily reports, among other forms of writing, often to their detriment. Reporting on conflicts that often arose between a Canadian engineering company and its Russian contractors, Artemeva (1998) wrote, "Both sides thought that engineering was engineering around the world, and so neither was able to accept the fact that each country had its own specific technical/engineering culture, which was reflected in the way written engineering discourse functioned" (p. 287). According to Blommaert (2013), "The language, syntax and orthography may be correct, yet…can fail to satisfy

the locally dominant normative expectations" (p. 448). Finally, in various contexts involving employees of multinational companies located in Greece (Angouri & Harwood, 2008), accounting and engineering professionals in Australia (Knoch et al., 2016), and engineers in Canada (Artemeva, 1998), tone and content errors were identified as hindrances to clear communication.

2.5.3 Social Challenges

Because workplace writing is a social act (Du, 2020; Duff et al., 2000; Leki et al., 2008; Machili, 2014; Parks, 2016), the potential exists for conflict to arise at some point. In terms of interacting with others, for example, Machili (2014) pointed out that emails are largely transactional or business-oriented, but occasionally relational. The literature indicates that an understanding of how and when to use relational language is especially helpful for communication via email for work or business purposes (Machili, 2014). As a training specialist in one study warned, "…email is one of the dangerous communication media that could be interpreted in a different way" (Alali, 2019, p. 42), resulting in misunderstandings and possibly conflict. Du (2020) also suggested that soft skills training could be helpful in situations where ideas must be communicated with care.

Regarding collaboration, Machili (2014) expressed another concern from a community of practice (CofP) perspective:

> …the process [of collaboration] is far from simple as it is not only restricted to giving and receiving collegial help but is subject to power imbalances and conflicts between gatekeepers and newcomers who struggle to fit in. The visible formal type of collaboration and the invisible informal type outside official duties

become relevant here as relations of power can be negotiated in less visible aspects of workplace communication. (pp. 12-13)

Another potential for conflict may present itself when employees with stronger writing skills are asked to assist other staff members who were hired specifically to perform certain writing tasks. Hu and Hoare (2017) indicated that employees with writing difficulties could potentially increase the workload of their colleagues. In fact, one participant in Machili's (2014) study stated that taking on the technical writing tasks assigned to other staff was beyond the scope of his duties; however, he did the work firstly, because it was expected, and secondly, to prevent misunderstandings with clients and partners, which he might later be called upon to resolve. He further hinted that, in the economic climate at that time, his ability and willingness to perform such tasks might provide him some job security in the event that any positions were made redundant (Machili, 2014).

Moreover, Machili (2014) suggested that actions sometimes deliberately taken by more experienced staff can undermine the efforts of novice employees to develop necessary skills: "…gatekeeping by the powerful members of the community can further obstruct the newcomers' socialisation and question the extent to which workplace [*sic*] is a democratic place" (p.122). Roberts (2010) elaborated, "Misunderstandings, racist comments, and the deliberate noncontact of some groups in relation to others both limit opportunities for socialization and actively construct resistances to it" (p. 217).

2.6 Workplace Writing Strategies

In this section, I will discuss the most significant findings related to workplace writing strategies in general, followed by the findings regarding technology-based strategies. Of course, many of these strategies are also employed by L1 writers as well.

Applying/Seeking Feedback

As indicated by Apelman (2010), Arkoudis et al. (2009), Bremner (2012), Hu and Gonzales (2020), Knoch et al. (2016), Parks (2000), and Parks and Maguire (1999), a willingness to apply feedback and input from colleagues is helpful in learning workplace writing skills. Du (2020) reported that the participants in her study who applied constructive feedback to their writing improved their skills; conversely, those who resisted doing so lost out on valuable opportunities for growth.

Co-writing

One of the ways in which mentoring takes place is by co-writing, which involves more senior employees assisting and guiding newly hired employees through writing processes, as demonstrated by the study of Swedish engineers (Apelman, 2010), and as indicated in the study of accounting and engineering professionals in Australia (Knoch et al., 2016). This strategy was also employed by francophone nurses in the studies conducted by Parks (2000) and Parks and Maguire (1999). Hu and Hoare (2017) noted, "some companies and institutions have adopted a team-approach for work projects, which allows employees to work to their strengths and fulfill responsibilities they are capable of" (p. 8). Positive illustrations of collaboration in workplace writing processes were provided by Alali (2019), who mentioned the use of Google Drive for this purpose. Sadly, Du (2020) reported that avoidance of writing caused engineers in her study to miss

out on such opportunities. Machili (2014), however, viewed collaboration as a double-edged sword, for reasons mentioned earlier, in the discussion about social challenges.

Evaluating Writing

Hu and Gonzales (2020) indicated that the EAL employees in their study, graduates of postsecondary programs in British Columbia, proofread their writing multiple times; some asked friends and colleagues to proofread as well.

Minimizing Writing

L2 employees in some studies sought various ways to simplify their writing in English. In the Gulf States, for example, employees at multinational corporations opted to communicate via WhatsApp whenever possible because, compared to email, it was a more informal, user-friendly, and efficient means of delivering information (Alali, 2019). Although Alali did not indicate whether the voice recording feature was utilized during such exchanges, the ability to supplement written text with this additional affordance may make the use of WhatsApp an appealing option for employees in some workplaces.

Performing Low-stakes Writing Tasks

When newly hired L2 employees are assigned less demanding/low-stakes tasks, it usually allows them time to become stronger writers. This was found to be true with employees at the multinational companies studied by Angouri and Harwood (2008), Swedish engineers (Apelman, 2010), and the public relations intern in Hong Kong, studied by Bremner (2012); however, such opportunities likely depended upon the employees' roles and levels of responsibility.

Repetition

Repetition allows developing writers to practice and appropriate new forms of writing. For example, the repetitive writing tasks of francophone nurses at an English-medium hospital in Montreal, enabled them to learn and retain new vocabulary and develop confidence writing reports specific to one department in the hospital before moving on to another (Parks & Maguire, 1999).

Researching

EAL employees indicated that researching for templates and other means of writing assistance was an essential component in the writing process (Hu & Gonzales, 2020).

Self-regulation and Agency

As suggested by Bremner (2012), learning is most likely to occur when newcomers to a workplace are able to observe, analyze, and reflect on the workplace culture and its practices to gain understanding and to identify opportunities to apply relevant concepts from prior learning. This is closely related to the concept of agency (Bandura, 1989), i.e., taking initiative to seek support, as shown in the studies of interns and newly hired graduates in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009), and francophone nurses in Montreal (Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999). The literature provides additional examples of other initiatives taken by L2 professionals outside of working hours to improve their writing, such as pursuing external training on their own initiative (Machili, 2014), and consulting occupation-specific books and articles to better understand technical terms and their appropriate usage (Apelman, 2010).

Translanguaging

The literature indicates that bilingual and multilingual work teams often switched between languages as they made decisions about writing tasks (Alali, 2019; Fraiberg, 2013, 2018; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002). Far from causing confusion, the ability to leverage other languages appeared to facilitate their work, and in fact, the mixing of languages was sometimes required where choices needed to be made regarding the language of written products, e.g., bilingual or monolingual.

Translation

At various levels of proficiency, L2 professionals occasionally translated from their L1 to English, and typically relied on electronic translators such as Google Translate for this purpose (Alali, 2019; Apelman, 2010; Fraiberg, 2013; Hu & Gonzales, 2020). This can sometimes have less than desirable results where precise translation is not possible. Errors may occur even when such tools are used with the greatest care (Alali, 2019).

Using Templates/Samples/Modelling

The use of templates and existing documents as models for writing, as illustrated in a study by Knoch et al. (2016), was viewed as a form of scaffolding for L2 graduates employed in Australia. The use of templates was also mentioned in other studies (Alali, 2019; Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Apelman, 2010; Arkoudis et al., 2009; Artemeva, 1998; Du, 2020; Hu & Gonzales, 2020). However, Angouri and Harwood (2008) suggested that templates were not necessarily as foolproof as managers generally supposed them to be and cautioned, "...workplace writing cannot and should not be considered a homogeneous entity... attempting to codify the range of genres employed in

even a single company without taking into account the possibility of intragenre variation would be hazardous" (p. 57). Similarly, Machili (2014) viewed the use of templates as potentially problematic because although they were generally designed with a particular internal or external audience and purpose in mind, the reality was that any one template might require significant modifications depending on the specific audience and purpose for which it was intended. Lockwood (2017), whose participants in the Philippines sometimes used templates in their web-chat exchanges, found them problematic as well since the fast-paced agent-to-client conversations made it difficult for agents to ascertain clients' needs and select appropriate responses while performing multiple tasks on the computer.

Workplace Support Initiatives/Programs

Apelman (2010), in her study of Swedish engineers, demonstrated that the development of writing skills was facilitated by in-house or company-funded training, consultations with an on-site language instructor, and opportunities to review writing by a company hired translator. In multilingual, multicultural companies in the Gulf countries, Alali (2019) indicated that editorial and translation services were sometimes provided for employees' use, with varying results. Arkoudis et al. (2009) found that employees in Australia might occasionally be funded to work with tutors, in-company trainers, or to attend courses in local colleges. Also in Australia, some employers provided training through mentoring or structured programs (Knoch et al., 2016). Machili (2014) reported that, possibly due to the economic crisis at the time of his study, few training opportunities were being provided or funded by multinational companies in Greece for employees.

2.7 Summary

The literature review provided a definition of workplace writing and highlighted some of the characteristics and genres of 21st century writing for work-related purposes, distinguishing this form of writing from academic and research-oriented writing, and providing some insight into the complexity of writing for work-related purposes. It was pointed out that, due to increased digital communication, it is impossible for most of today's workers to avoid writing, and that, regardless of their command of English, L2 professionals employed in EAL contexts are typically required to perform workplace writing tasks at the same level as their L1 peers. Four studies illustrated the dynamic and complex ways in which digital communication tools are used to perform routine writing tasks in some of today's workspaces, and it was suggested that writing in such work settings might pose difficulties for some L2 workers. Preparedness for workplace writing tasks was then discussed, and it was revealed that employers are generally dissatisfied with the writing skills of both L1 and L2 employees, and that the latter generally feel underprepared to meet workplace writing expectations. Concerning EAL postsecondary students in particular, it was suggested that an emphasis on preparation for high stakes tests, writing for academic purposes, and emphasis on content knowledge, with little feedback and motivation to improve their writing, resulted in difficulties writing effectively for work-related purposes. The notion of preparedness was explored in connection with a number of key principles in the development of workplace writing skills, which aimed to illustrate differences between traditional classroom learning and workplace learning. The literature review then introduced the challenges faced by L2

professionals in English-dominant contexts, followed by strategies used to perform workplace writing tasks effectively.

2.8 Gaps

The literature review revealed that the workplace writing challenges of L2 professionals are addressed to some extent, but only a small number of studies (14) relate to individuals employed in English workspaces in an EAL context. Those 14 studies were conducted in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009, and Knoch et al., 2016); the U.S. (Bausser, 2000; Du, 2020; Hartig & Lu, 2014; and Pihlaja, 2020); and Canada (Artemeva, 1998; Duff et al., 2000; Faez, 2010; Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Hu & Hoare, 2017; Myles, 2009; Parks, 2000; and Parks & Maguire, 1999). The remaining eight studies selected for the literature review involved L2 professionals employed in multinational companies and global work teams. Since English was the language of operation for those workspaces, their relevance to this study is clear. Furthermore, five of the 22 studies involved international postsecondary students or interns, and focused to some extent on the transition from writing for academic purposes to workplace writing (Arkoudis et al., 2009; Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Hu & Hoare, 2017; Knoch et al., 2016; Myles, 2009); one study highlighted internationally educated professionals (IEPs) and paid brief attention to writing (Faez, 2010), and one study involved both IEPs and international students and challenges associated with the use of Plain English for legal writing in the U.S. (Hartig & Lu, 2014). One study focused on immigrant Canadians in a language training program for health care workers and only minimally addressed writing for work-related purposes (Duff et al., 2000). Considering the ubiquitous use of technology use for personal and professional purposes, it was somewhat surprising to find only a few detailed references

to the use of technology in L2 workplace writing activities. Studies like those of Pihlaja (2020), Lockwood (2017), and Fraiberg (2013, 2018), provide insight on 21st century technology-based writing practices that are not given sufficient attention in the selected literature.

Only one study (Hu & Gonzales, 2020) focused exclusively on the workplace writing challenges and strategies of EAL employees. The nine participants were former international students who had graduated from postsecondary programs based in British Columbia, Canada. At the time of the study, the participants had been employed six months to eight years in retail and financial services, import/export, healthcare, IT, and animal care. The research focused on the types of writing activities performed by the employees in their work, their perspectives on the importance of strong workplace writing skills, challenges experienced, and plans for improvement. This study and earlier research on the expectations of EAL employers (Hu & Hoare, 2017) focus largely on differences between academic and workplace writing practices.

Because every workplace is different, traditional academic instruction is unlikely to prepare all learners for the tasks and practices that they are likely to encounter in a specific workplace, as well as ways of learning that differ from conventional learning (Freedman & Adam, 1996), not to mention the variation of written products and practices that are likely to exist even within the same organization (Angouri & Harwood, 2008). The same is true for conventional language training, according to Blommaert and Backus (2013): "Competences are as a rule sociolinguistically specific (a point very often overlooked by language teachers). They cluster around particular social arenas and become generative in those arenas…, but have no automatic applicability outside of

them" (p. 25). Thus, despite their best intentions, the efforts of language instructors to prepare learners for real-world writing tasks are likely effective only to a degree. Notwithstanding the confidentiality issues that hinder such research, a greater understanding is needed of the challenges faced by EAL workers with developing L2 workplace writing skills, especially in workplaces where employers generally hold the same expectations for all workers, regardless of language ability (Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Hu & Hoare, 2017).

2.9 Research Questions

Having found limited research related to the workplace writing experiences of L2 professionals employed in English workspaces in an EAL context, this study served to fill some of the above gaps in the literature. Specifically, the principal aim of this research was to determine how L2 professionals with developing workplace writing skills manage workplace writing demands in an EAL context. Thus, my research questions were:

1) What workplace writing challenges are typically experienced by EAL professionals with developing workplace writing skills?
2) What strategies are employed to fulfill on-the-job writing expectations?
3) In what ways are workplace writing tasks facilitated using technology?

3 Research Methods

This chapter presents the research methodology and methods for the study. Beginning with the purpose of the study and the design philosophy, I follow with the rationale for the case study approach, an overview of the data collection methods, a description of the participants, and the data analysis procedures.

3.1 Purpose of Study

The literature review revealed distinct differences between classroom and workplace learning, and provided insight as to challenges encountered by L2 professionals performing writing tasks in English-dominant workspaces. Furthermore, reports on the integration experiences of EAL professionals, discussed in the introduction to this thesis, indicated a number of factors which may act as employment barriers, including language proficiency. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to determine how L2 professionals with developing workplace writing skills manage on-the-job writing demands in an EAL context. Specifically, the study aimed to learn more about challenges faced and strategies employed by EAL professionals.

3.2 Design Philosophy

This study is influenced by a constructivist-pragmatic paradigm. According to Creswell (2014), "the goal of [constructivist] research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (p. 8). As a result, such research often seeks to make sense of the social dynamics at play in "the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of

the participants" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). From a pragmatic perspective (Creswell, 2014), this study is concerned with preparing EAL professionals to fulfill workplace writing expectations.

Constructivist researchers typically engage in qualitative research, which enables them to gain an understanding of their participants' experience (Creswell, 2014). Pragmatic researchers, however, tend to use an eclectic approach to gathering and analyzing data, which enables them to better define the issue which is the focus of their research (Creswell, 2014). The eclectic approach to this study is reflected not only in the methods by which the data were collected, but also by the deductive and inductive techniques utilized to analyze the data.

3.3 Rationale for Case Study Approach

Case study design is driven mainly by three perspectives, as put forth by Yin (2018), Stake (2005), and Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Elements of two case study perspectives can be seen in this study. For instance, this case study could be described as exploratory (Yin, 2018) and instrumental (Stake, 2005): through exploring the experiences of the selected participants, insight was gained regarding the experiences of EAL professionals with developing workplace writing skills. As Duff (2014) stated, "The main goal of case study research is to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being…examined closely within the context of the case-in-context and against the backdrop of existing theory and research" (pp. 236-237).

In accordance with a case study approach, I used the themes identified in the literature review to guide the design of the study and, to some extent, to analyze the data. As definitions and approaches to case study research vary among researchers and across

disciplines, I chose to consult sources within the applied linguistics field to guide my research, specifically Duff (2008, 2014). According to Duff (2014), case study research has long been used in applied linguistics to shed light on issues related to language learning and language use: “In addition to contributing to theory, findings from such studies have often influenced educational policies and practices. They have helped practitioners and stakeholders better understand the experiences and issues affecting people in various socioeducational and linguistic settings” (p. 234). Duff (2008) further observed that many early theories of learning were inspired to a degree by the researchers’ own language learning experiences; and in recent times, case study findings have played a key role in highlighting linguistic issues arising from increased migration resulting from globalization (Duff, 2014), which is a topic closely connected to this study. Duff (2014) anticipated that “The presentation of cases is expected to lead to new levels of understanding, awareness, empathy, and possibly intervention, and further research on the part of readers and researchers and even among participants themselves” (p. 237). By exploring the writing experiences of EAL professionals, this study aimed to gain some understanding as to how such individuals develop workplace writing skills, and hopefully offer insight into the challenges they encounter as well as their strategies for effectively meeting workplace writing demands.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Case studies typically feature triangulation or the collection of data via multiple sources that may or may not be exclusively qualitative. Duff (2008) observed that in SLA research, such case studies are increasingly the norm. Triangulation reduces the potential for bias and ensures a greater degree of accuracy in the interpretation of the data

(Creswell, 2014; Duff, 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Griffee, 2018; Hyland, 2016; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Shenton, 2004). The triangulation of the three forms of data (questionnaire, interview, and think-aloud) helped to ensure, to some extent, the consistency and validity of the data gathered from each participant. In the following sections, I describe the data collection methods and present the rationale for the questionnaire, the interview, and the think-aloud. It should be noted that the presentation below merely reflects the order in which these methods were undertaken. As the data analysis and the findings will indicate, substantially more attention was paid to the data gathered during the interview and think-aloud, as those data were perceived to provide the most valuable insight into the experiences of the five cases.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire served two purposes: firstly, as a screening tool to identify candidates who met the criteria to participate in the interview and think-aloud due to their proficiency in writing and amount of workplace writing experience; secondly, as a means of acquainting potential participants with the scope of the study by eliciting information about their workplace writing practices, challenges, and strategies. This self-reported information was also helpful in guiding the design of the interview and the think-aloud activity. Prior L2 studies involving the use of surveys as a data collection tool provided some guidance in determining suitable items to include in the questionnaire (Gimenez, 2014; Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Hu & Hoare, 2017). A link to the questionnaire was included in the initial invitation to a purposive sample of participants comprised of internationally educated professionals (IEPs) attending occupation-specific language training (OSLT) classes at a local community college in Winter 2020, and in Spring

2020, to former clients of mine who had attended a similar program years prior. Respondents were given three weeks to complete and submit the questionnaire (estimated completion time: 15 to 20 minutes). After submitting the questionnaire, they were invited to attend the interview and think-aloud activity. Five respondents accepted the invitation to participate in the study. The five cases were explored in detail. The questionnaire is included in Appendix C, and the responses can be found in Appendices D, E, and F.

3.4.2 Interview

Referring to the flexibility of interviews as a data collection tool, Hyland (2016) observed that "…interviews are used widely in writing research to learn more about attitudes to writing, about teaching and learning and about reasons for rhetorical choices" (p. 118). Semi-structured interviews, in particular, use a list of questions as a guide, but allow the researcher to probe for more information where needed. As well, they allow for comparisons of data across interviews (Griffee, 2018; Hyland, 2016; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Newton, 2010). According to Newton (2010), "It is the power of semi-structured interviews to provide rich, original voices which can be used to construct research narratives that gives the method its invaluable quality" (p. 6). Semi-structured interviews can reveal information not previously considered by the researcher. Moreover, as writing skills are the focus of this research, interviews seemed to be the most efficient method for eliciting data from participants who may have preferred to provide verbal rather than written data. Further, interview data can easily be combined with other forms of data to explain or strengthen interpretations, which supports the notion of triangulation.

The interview included seven open-ended questions aimed at eliciting detailed information on participants' workplace writing experiences. In particular, the questions

aimed to elicit factors in the development of participants' workplace writing skills, strategies and technology used to perform workplace writing tasks, and recommendations for other EAL professionals. Follow-up questions were asked, via email, to probe for further details as needed.

To reduce any anxiety over our meeting and to enable participants to prepare for the interview by reflecting on their responses, the questions were sent to the interviewees in advance. The interviews were conducted via video conferencing software and commenced with video, but to help participants feel more at ease, videos were turned off before the actual interview began. The interview and the think-aloud activity, which was conducted immediately afterward, were both recorded and transcribed within two to three weeks of the interview/think-aloud with the assistance of *otter.ai* transcription software (Https://Otter.Ai/), which captured a substantial amount of the content. I listened to the recordings several more times to edit the transcripts where needed, then sent them to the participants for their approval. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

3.4.3 Think-aloud Activity

To determine what people actually do, Griffee (2018) suggested that it is best to observe them. However, in work-related research, particularly at this level of study, it is generally neither practical nor feasible to observe participants performing writing tasks in their workplaces, due to privacy and confidentiality standards. This is noted in the literature as a possible hindrance to research on the workplace writing experiences of L2 professionals (Leki et al., 2008; Parks, 2016). Thus, despite its limitations (discussed below), a qualitative think-aloud activity was conducted as an alternative. The think-aloud activity, an introspective method in which participants were asked to verbalize their

thought processes in relation to a common workplace writing task, enhanced the other data gathered throughout the study (Charters, 2003; Hyland, 2016; Mackey & Gass 2005). Mackey and Gass (2005) noted that "The use of introspection assumes that what takes place in consciousness can be observed in much the same way that one can observe events in the external world" (p. 77). Furthermore, they maintained that verbal reports often enabled "access to processes that are unavailable by other means" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 77). Charters (2003), a teacher-researcher and frequent user of think-aloud activities, stated that because researchers generally avoid interrupting participants during a think-aloud activity, the ensuing data must be interpreted; therefore, the design and use of this method should be considered with care, if it is to be effective.

Because think-aloud activities only lend insight to working memory, they are somewhat limited in their ability to provide a complete picture. Researchers therefore have mixed opinions concerning the use of the think-aloud method as a data collection tool, but following a review of 94 studies involving the use of such techniques, Fox et al. (2011) concluded that, even with its limitations, think-aloud is "a legitimate and practicable method of collecting information on thought processes... the only nonreactive method of collecting the verbalized contents of thoughts while participants focus on completing challenging tasks" (p. 338).

With the consent of the participants, eight workplace writing scenarios were presented immediately after the interview. The participants were then instructed to describe the steps they would take to perform a common workplace writing task. Once they had selected an option relevant to their workplace writing experience, they were allowed five minutes, if needed, to reflect upon the steps they would be most likely to

take before, during, and after writing (e.g., planning, composing, revising, and evaluating the task to ensure that it achieved the desired purpose). They were asked to consider whether they would consult anyone in the process and the forms of technology that they would be most likely to use. No writing was required for the procedure. As the results indicate, the data gathered via the think-aloud procedure provided insight into the thought processes of the participants as they verbalized their approach to a common workplace writing task. Essentially, I was interested in identifying challenges that might typically be experienced and strategies that might be used in the process of executing a similar task in real life. This activity also served, to some extent, as a means of ensuring internal reliability. Together, the interview and think-aloud method varied from 40 to 60 minutes per participant. The participants approved the transcripts, and no changes were requested. The think-aloud procedure is located in Appendix B.

3.5 Participants

The participants in this study were IEPs with varying amounts of workplace writing experience in English and at least an intermediate level of proficiency in writing (CLB 6/IELTS 5.5). The proficiency criterion coincided with the level of proficiency typically required to gain admission to occupation-specific language training programs, which are geared toward employment-ready IEPs. As stated earlier, the invitation to participate was distributed to a purposive sample, comprised of current (at the time of the study) and former clients of two occupation-specific language training programs. Twenty-four responses to the questionnaire were received, and all respondents were invited to participate in the interview and the think-aloud. However, only five respondents volunteered to do so.

The five self-selected participants were given the option of not responding to any questions they did not wish to answer in the questionnaire, the interview, and the think-aloud. They were assigned pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity; and due to the small number of participants, I have chosen not to share any data that could jeopardize this effort. As stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), "…it is the writer's obligation to be as protective as possible of the rights of respondent individuals" (p. 369). Following is a brief description of the five participants who completed the interview and the think-aloud activity. Additional details, specific to their workplace writing experiences, will be presented in the findings.

The participants' languages included Spanish, Mandarin, and Russian, and their ages ranged from 36 to 55. The average length of residence in Canada was 8.5 years, with a maximum of 12 years; and average years of experience working in English was 9 years, with a maximum of 13 years. Work experience outside Canada ranged from 2 to 12 years, and Canadian work experience averaged almost 7 years, with a maximum of 10 years. Three participants reported that they had earned a graduate degree; the remaining participants reported having earned an undergraduate degree. Four participants reported the ability to write "very well" in their L1; the other participant reported the ability to write "fairly well." Current or most recent occupational sectors included financial services, logistics, real estate, and hospitality, with four participants reporting an intermediate level of responsibility; the other participant reported a senior role. Three were employed in large companies (with over 500 staff); the remaining two were employed in small and medium companies (5 to 99 employees and 100 to 499 employees). Two participants reported spending over 75% of a typical shift writing in

English; two reported spending 50% to 75% of a typical shift writing in English. Time spent speaking in English ranged from 50% to over 75% for those four participants. The remaining participant reported devoting under 25% of a typical shift to writing and speaking in English.

3.6 Data Analysis

Before proceeding to the thematic analysis of the interview and think-aloud data, I present the three research questions (RQs) once again:

1) What workplace writing challenges are typically experienced by EAL professionals with developing workplace writing skills?
2) What strategies are employed to fulfill on-the-job writing expectations?
3) In what ways are workplace writing tasks facilitated using technology?

The data collected via the interview and the think-aloud activity were analysed to answer the research questions, and the questionnaire provided supplementary information. RQs 2 and 3 were posed during the interview and think-aloud. Although RQ1 was not asked directly during the interview and think-aloud, participants spoke freely about their challenges while responding to other questions. Following their approval of the interview and think-aloud transcripts, I elicited clarification from individual participants with a follow-up email, where needed. After the approval of the transcripts, the interview, think-aloud, and follow-up data were analyzed using thematic analysis and an extended data analysis, which are described in the following sections.

3.6.1 Thematic Analysis

The preliminary analysis entailed coding the interview and think-aloud data using template analysis, a deductive, a priori approach (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). This coding method gave direction and structure to the data analysis, enabling more reflexive engagement with the data, since the findings of the literature review and the research questions guided me in the process of assigning codes to the data. The first phase of the analysis entailed (1) "unitizing" the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 344). i.e., breaking down phrases, sentences, or paragraphs into informational units, (2) categorizing similar ideas or units of information, (3) checking the groups for overlap, and (4) reducing the idea units to as few themes as possible.

First, I identified four main themes upon which the research questions were based: development of workplace writing skills, challenges, strategies, and technology/tools. To familiarize myself with the data, I printed and read, line by line, the interview and think-aloud transcripts, along with the follow-up responses, labelling portions of text with the four themes. Then, using 10 sub-themes identified in the literature review, I read the transcripts again, labelling the data with the sub-themes. As I did so, I added descriptions to aid in the coding process, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Template of Themes

Initial Themes (Research questions)	**Sub-themes (Literature findings)**	**Themes with Descriptions (Template)**
Development of Writing Skills	Social aspects of writing development	Social aspects of writing development (socialization, Communities of Practice (CofP), apprenticeship, Activity Theory, etc.)
	Formal training	Formal instruction (education, programs, courses, etc.)
	Experiential learning	Practical, real-life experience
Challenges	Language-based challenges	Language-based challenges (related to vocabulary, grammar, etc.)
	Culturally based challenges	Culturally based challenges (related to writing style, etc.)
	Social challenges	Social challenges (related to interaction with coworkers)
Strategies	Positive Strategies	Positive strategies (effective means of coping with writing challenges)
	Negative Strategies	Negative strategies (ineffective means of coping with writing challenges)
Technology/tools	Benefits	Technology – pros (technology as an aid in the writing process)
	Drawbacks	Technology – cons (technology as a hindrance in the writing process)

Gibbs (2013) suggested that the use of software makes analytic thinking more transparent; moreover, using software allows for greater flexibility during the analysis process, as it aids significantly with the organization of the data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) felt that software "enables the researcher to creatively observe the possible links and connections among the different aspects of the data" (p. 223). Thus, I imported the interview and think-aloud transcripts, along with the follow-up responses, to ATLAS.ti (Version 9, https://atlasti.com) and repeated the process outlined above (scrolling through the interview and think-aloud transcripts, along with the follow-up responses, and

labelling portions of text based on the research questions and literature findings). I then used the software to categorize the units of information (idea units). Creswell (2012) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advised that the categories be a manageable number that can be further reduced to about "five to seven themes" (Creswell, 2012, p. 245), that is, "the fewer the categories, the greater the level of abstraction" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 214).

While using ATLAS.ti, I was able to engage with the data on another level and capture any data that I had previously overlooked during the manual coding. Once satisfied with my results, I saved the 36-page report of the categorized data as a Word document, printed the pages, laid them out, and proceeded to further reduce the categories and deal with any overlapping issues (Creswell, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.6.2 Extended Data Analysis

Template analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1992), the method by which I had initially engaged with the data, allowed only for identification of predetermined themes. To extend the analysis of the data, I opted to use a technique recommended by Creswell (2012) for beginning researchers. This technique consisted of three coding phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The first phase, open coding, enabled me to capture additional themes beyond those identified in the literature review. With the four main themes/groups (categories) and 10 sub-themes (sub-categories) that had emerged from the earlier analysis (Table 1), I continued to explore the data in ATLAS.ti. In the process of open coding, I identified additional concepts to add to the initial categories: feelings about writing, self-study efforts,

references to experience with different writing tasks, importance of writing skills, recommendations for other EAL professionals.

The second phase of analysis, axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), or "interconnecting themes" (Creswell, 2012, p. 252), involved selecting one principal category or phenomenon and identifying relationships between it and other categories. Prior to doing this, I used the ATLAS.ti software to print a "Code Group Report" to check the categories and corresponding sub-categories, which led me to rename and reassign some of them. This approach, based on a coding paradigm proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), resulted in a conceptual model of factors related to the development of the participants' workplace writing skills, including causal conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and outcomes. This conceptual model will be presented in the next chapter, following the discussion of the results of the thematic analysis.

The software enabled me to create a full report of all the data that I had coded, grouped according to the sub-categories I had assigned them to. I exported this report as a Microsoft Word document to a secure drive and worked with the quotations from there, verifying that they were connected in some way to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This facilitated my management of the data in the final phase of analysis, selective coding, during which I reduced the categories to three key themes that had emerged from the data (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) put it, during the selective coding phase, there is "a subtle shift to a slightly deductive mode of thought" (p. 210). In this final phase of analysis, I reduced the categories to three key themes (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which I determined to be central to the

development and acquisition of workplace writing skills: (1) motivation, (2) awareness of the role of self, and (3) awareness of the role of others. These themes will be discussed in more detail in the latter part of the next chapter.

4 Findings

This chapter presents the key findings of the data analysis responding to the three research questions, starting with descriptions of the five participants and following with the results of the thematic analysis of their interview, think-aloud, and data. Finally, the results of the extended data analysis, which was conducted to further explore the data, will be presented.

4.1 Five Cases

Table 2 presents the profiles of the five participants. To preserve anonymity, I have omitted potentially identifying information such as length of residence in Canada, length of Canadian work experience, and years of experience working in English. Data pertaining to all questionnaire respondents are presented in aggregate, in Appendix D.

The native languages of the five participants included Spanish, Russian, and Chinese (Mandarin). The participants are each described below, in the order in which they appear in Table 2. To better comprehend the extent of their workplace writing experiences, their questionnaire responses regarding the frequency of various workplace writing tasks and associated difficulties, if any, are included in the descriptions.

Table 2

Participants' Profiles

Name*	Gender & Age Range	Education	Sector	Role & Level	Size of Employer	% of writing per shift**
Marina	F 36 to 45	Graduate degree	Financial Services	Collections Specialist Intermediate	500+	under 25%
Victor	M 36 to 45	Undergraduate degree	Hospitality	Night Auditor Intermediate	5 to 99	over 75%
Anastasia	F 36 to 45	Undergraduate degree	Real Estate	Analyst Intermediate	100 to 499	50% to 75%
Carlos	M 46 to 55	Graduate degree	Financial Services	Finance Manager Senior	500+	50% to 75%
Sue	F 36 to 45	Graduate degree	Logistics	Sales and Trade Coordinator Intermediate	500+	over 75%

Note. *Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants. **Percentage of writing in English per typical shift.

4.1.1 Marina

Collections Specialist (Intermediate)

"Words sometimes just fly from my head."

Marina had worked as a financial analyst in her home country. She spoke about her workplace writing experiences there, particularly how she had learned to write financial analysis reports in her L1, in her first job after finishing her master's degree. She described how she had modelled her writing based on reports previously written by others: "I never received training for this. I learned it on the job." Her boss and coworkers used to correct her writing. Marina reported being able to write "very well" in her L1.

She first learned to write for general and academic purposes with her English teacher in her country. However, she did not find the training to be applicable to workplace writing in English. She found the instruction she received in occupation-specific language training and LINC classes to be more useful. Marina relied heavily on the electronic translator, Google Translate, especially when she was at a loss for appropriate words. Although she admitted that it could not always be counted on to provide an accurate translation, she felt the tool was adequate for her needs. Marina repeatedly emphasized the need for feedback and the importance of formal training. She expressed concerns about the potential to "abuse" (offend) others in writing, and about being too aggressive in tone. She valued feedback from more fluent English speakers (coworkers and supervisors) on her job, but it was not usually offered, and she was reluctant to seek it: "I was shy because my boss said that working hours are for work, not for anything else, so I didn't feel comfortable asking people for feedback because it's my personal writing need." However, she asked questions in order to learn workplace writing practices, acknowledging that "each job is specific, and we need to learn some rules." Her advice to other EAL professionals was to "…be prepared that coworkers and boss… when you communicate during the working day, they never say what is your mistake." In the absence of such feedback, Marina advised that EAL employees seek formal training to practice and develop their writing skills. On the questionnaire, Marina reported that she performed the following workplace writing tasks occasionally: internal emails, external emails, and meeting minutes. Of the three tasks, she reported finding external emails to be the most difficult, followed by internal emails, and meeting minutes. As a Collections Specialist, her work involved more speaking than writing.

Marina's Recommendations for EAL Professionals

The more one writes, the more one feels comfortable in writing. Also, it is essential to do everything possible in English because writing cannot be developed in isolation of other language skills. She also recommended building an adequate vocabulary and taking language classes, as she felt that ongoing correction was critical to improving writing skills.

4.1.2 Victor

Night Auditor (Intermediate)

"The language is a monster."

Before settling in Canada, Victor had travelled for about seven years while working with an American company. He had returned to his home country for two months, every six to eight months. He stated that he had come to Canada firstly because of love and secondly because of the quality of life. He had first learned to write in English at high school (basic writing skills) and university (business/professional writing). The university courses had taught him the basics, but once he started working, he realized that real-life writing was "totally different." He reported that the instruction in business English had been adequate enough for use in his country, but the expectations were much higher when he started working overseas for a foreign company. Victor had a considerable amount of experience writing for work-related purposes in his L1; because communication was essential for 24/7 shift work in hotels, he and his colleagues regularly communicated with one another in writing, via notes and emails, sharing pertinent information with team members in order to ensure the efficient operation of their workplace. He reported the ability to write "very well" in his L1.

When he started to work for an American company, opportunities to write in English increased, and he believed that his earlier workplace writing experiences had prepared him for his "real English" jobs in the U.S. and in Canada. After arriving in Canada, he attended an occupation-specific language training program and a few university courses. Victor enjoyed the diversity of people that his work allowed him to interact with and felt that he was learning a lot; however, he expressed some frustration over a perceived lack of support for ESL newcomers like himself, in positions formerly held in English work settings, and questioned whether these experiences had been a form of discrimination. He was very conscious of the challenges involved in settling in a new country and developing proficiency in another language. After comparing English to "a monster," he explained, "I was referring to the hard experience that is to face another language, another country, new people, new 'rules,' new customs; for adults coming from places with different first languages."

Victor's situation was unique for two reasons: first, because he worked alone at night, he had no-one to consult for feedback or provide input on his writing; furthermore, his experience seeking guidance on his writing had not been as positive as some of the other participants. Therefore, he represented the "negative case" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004) in this study. He lamented the situation to some degree, but it seemed that he had grown accustomed to it over time and had learned to use available resources as writing aids, such as templates, manuals, emails, or memos. On the questionnaire, Victor reported performing the following workplace writing tasks frequently or very frequently: internal emails, memos, internal informational reports, internal analytical/persuasive reports, and other writing tasks specific to his occupation. He did not report difficulties

with any of these tasks, although he acknowledged that unfamiliar words, expressions or use of slang could pose challenges at times, and he mentioned a need to be conscious that words in his L1 did not always translate directly to English. In his present position, he communicated occasionally via instant messaging for follow-up and confirmation purposes, and found it to be a quick and easy means of communication. With writing as a key responsibility in every position he had held in his 15 years of employment, Victor believed that strong workplace writing skills are extremely necessary for effective communication of ideas and information, but "most importantly to be part of a team, to 'fit' at work." Regarding his development as a writer, he remarked that at first he had been fearful due to his limitations, but had grown confident in his ability and style of writing.

Victor's Recommendations for EAL professionals

ESL newcomers to Canada should take advantage of training programs provided by the government for immigrant professionals, in order to access resources that they might not otherwise be aware of. He also recommended seeking a mentor with genuine intentions. Describing himself as someone who preferred to be in control of his circumstances, he regretted that he had not enjoyed his first several months in Canada due to anxiety about finding employment and concern about feeling like "a parasite." Additional recommendations related generally to settlement; for instance, he advised newcomers to actively seek opportunities, outside their linguistic communities, to interact with L1 speakers of English.

4.1.3 Anastasia

Financial Analyst, Real Estate Company (Intermediate)

"Personally, like, inside I feel a struggle."

Anastasia had first learned to write in English at middle school in her home country. Her English studies had continued through high school and university. She had studied English for about 10 years before arriving in Canada but had no L1 workplace writing experience; however, she reported the ability to write "fairly well" in her L1. After her arrival, she attended an occupation-specific language training program and a professional speaking class at a local university. She expressed a passion for learning English and for learning in general. She had first been inspired to learn English as a child—as an avid reader of Stephen King books, she had wanted to read all of his books in their original language, English. Despite her strong interest in learning English, she expressed some ambivalence about writing in English, stating that when she first started to write for work-related purposes, it was very difficult, and her managers had to correct her constantly. She stated that it had taken three to five years to feel comfortable to write professionally in English. At the time of the interview, she expressed confidence about her writing and said that it had gotten easier to write over the years because her role entailed a lot of writing. At the same time, she said it was still a struggle for her. She had developed a style of writing that her managers were familiar with, but she acknowledged that slight adjustments might be necessary when writing to other audiences.

Since Anastasia enjoyed her work as a financial analyst, she suggested that any negative feelings toward writing might be related to her personality. At the time of the interview, she stated that she had accumulated about 10 years of experience writing

emails and reports, the last three of which had been focused on professional report writing. Anastasia had not studied English formally since the university class she attended, but she continued to develop her English workplace writing skills by reading financial analysis and real estate books and by watching movies related to her profession. In spite of her struggles with writing, Anastasia expressed appreciation for her managers, who consistently provided feedback, especially at the start, when she had to adapt to writing in English which, in her opinion, differed significantly in structure from her L1. As she shared during the think-aloud activity, she often found it difficult to know when to stop writing. She reported that, apart from setting her writing aside for a short time and then reading it again, "I don't have any particular strategy--- I just need to like it." Anastasia's questionnaire responses indicated that she performed the following workplace writing tasks frequently or very frequently: internal emails, external emails, memos, internal informational reports, internal analytical/persuasive reports, technical reports, presentation materials, handwritten notes, and letters (to other businesses). She did not report difficulties with any of these tasks. As she mentioned during the interview, her first step in any new or unfamiliar task was to find a template, if possible. She indicated that she made it a habit to triple check for typos in names and numbers, and that she sometimes found it difficult to understand instructions delivered by speakers with different accents. She reported that she also communicated for work-related purposes via WhatsApp and text messages and did not experience any challenges with those tools because they were "more informal."

Anastasia's Recommendations for EAL Professionals

Anastasia suggested that watching movies related to their profession might help L2 professionals to learn useful vocabulary: "It's not related probably to writing but you can put it in writing, you know? I think it's all connected." She also recommended researching about different genres of workplace writing and reading a lot, especially blogs. Finally, she advised that other EAL professionals try to think in English as much as possible and to use English when messaging, even with connections who live in Canada and share the same L1. In her opinion, good workplace writing skills are critical because workplace communication nowadays is mostly written.

4.1.4 Carlos

Finance Manager at a Major Financial Institution (Senior)

"We need to show our strengths…"

In his home country, Carlos had completed his high school years in a German school and taught for five years at a German institute. After he got married and moved to Canada, he forgot most of his German. He could still read and understand it, but was no longer able to speak it. He and his wife chose to come to Canada because of political changes which caused some economic instability in their home country. They were inspired to leave their country when a friend of theirs emailed them to report that she was leaving for Canada. For Carlos, who held a good position in an insurance company in his country, it was a difficult decision because he knew nothing about Canada. When he and his wife applied, they were given the option to move to Vancouver, Toronto, or Quebec. They did not consider the latter option because they did not speak French. After flipping a coin, they chose Toronto, and the entire family departed for Canada, with 17 suitcases.

Carlos had first started learning English in the German school, which offered a trilingual education experience. He stated that his preferred language during that time was German, and he had intended to pursue university studies in Germany, but his parents disapproved. Having studied English for about nine years in his country, he had felt fairly confident about his English until he moved to Canada. After their arrival, he and his wife took ESL classes, and he attended an occupation-specific language training program. At the time of the interview, Carlos was employed in a senior role at a major financial institution, and he loved his work, but he did not particularly enjoy writing, even in his L1, despite reporting the ability to write "very well." In both languages, he preferred to keep his writing as brief as possible, and found ways (bullet points, for example) to avoid writing more than he needed to. As the only participant in a senior role, he otherwise seemed generally confident in his abilities. In spite of Carlos' expressed dislike for the skill, he seemed fairly confident in his ability to communicate effectively in writing, perhaps because he regularly sought feedback from his colleagues. He felt that it was important not to feel ashamed about seeking feedback from a co-worker: "I have told them, don't be polite to me, just tell me [if I say or write something wrong] because that is the only way I can improve my language skills." He indicated that he sometimes requested feedback on completed writing tasks and, when writing minutes after a meeting, sometimes sought assistance recalling comments made earlier. But he was also clear that asking a co-worker was usually the last resort, to avoid distracting others from their work. When asked about his use of instant messaging tools for work, he mentioned that he had set up a WhatsApp group for his team shortly after they began working from home due to the pandemic but decided to restrict its use to socializing since their work

was highly confidential. He indicated that he had no challenges with it because he and his colleagues used short sentences and emoticons. On the questionnaire, Carlos reported performing the following workplace writing tasks frequently or very frequently: internal emails, internal informational reports, internal analytical/persuasive reports, presentation materials, and collaborative/team writing projects. He reported no major difficulties with these tasks.

Carlos' Recommendations for EAL Professionals

Carlos strongly recommended that other IEPs be aware of their weaknesses and strengths. He recognized language was a weakness to be conquered for some newcomers but emphasized the importance of demonstrating one's strengths in order to compensate and compete successfully at work. His advice for building language proficiency was to read a lot, study a lot, and identify transferable skills. To improve vocabulary, he recommended reading as many work-related documents as possible and attending language training classes. To practice writing, he suggested that L2 professionals write paraphrased summaries of portions of reading material, which he acknowledged was not easy to do, but very helpful. Carlos felt it was crucial for L2 professionals to develop strong written communication skills in order to compete with skilled users of English "because when you speak fast, maybe no one will notice that you make an error. When you write, you have to be very careful."

4.1.5 Sue

Sales and Trade Coordinator (Intermediate)

"Only if you have enough input, you can have output."

Sue had majored in English Language and Literature and had always wanted to experience the culture of any English-speaking country, so when she was presented with the option to apply for immigration to Canada, she took advantage of it. She had first learned to write in English in middle school and high school, following which she was required to take English writing courses at various levels at her university. Altogether, she had studied English for 13 years in her country. Although her formal training emphasized academic writing skills, she found the instruction helped her significantly after she found employment in Canada: she was able to organize sentences and paragraphs without difficulty, and she felt that the paraphrasing skills she had learned were also a great help. She had attended an occupation-specific language training program after arriving in Canada, but had not pursued any other training. She enjoyed her work, even though the workload was somewhat overwhelming at times. She had substantial writing experience as a teacher in her L1, writing curriculum, and writing notes for the students. Some of the writing had been in English. Sue reported the ability to write "very well" in her L1 and appeared to be very confident in her L2 writing skills. She was also very positive about learning and improving her skills. Her training and experience as a teacher in her home country may have been one reason for her confidence. Unlike the other participants, Sue felt that seeking help from supervisors was a sign of incompetence; nevertheless, she acknowledged their willingness to help when their assistance was needed. Sue later elaborated that this was just her personal feeling;

she admitted that she did not know for certain how such requests would be perceived by her supervisors. She indicated that she had learnt a lot from more experienced colleagues who were skilled writers. On the questionnaire, Sue reported writing internal and external emails very frequently, and occasionally composing letters (to individual customers/clients). She reported little to no difficulties with these tasks, with the exception of finding synonyms for some words, or understanding how to use certain phrases. When she was unsure of terminology, she referred to an online dictionary or performed an online search. She indicated that her average workplace communication practices consisted of 80% emails and 20% phone calls and meetings.

During the think-aloud activity, Sue was able to articulate, without hesitation, the many factors that typically required her consideration before sending an email in response to an enquiry (e.g., Was the customer a big or small company? Domestic or overseas/international? Was the product of interest a popular item or one that needed to be made to order? Was it a large volume order or small volume? Was it a one-time order or a regular customer? Was transport/shipping needed? If so, was it to be by air, ocean, or ground? Was the customer inquiring about availability, shipping date and/or estimated date of delivery?) She also reported the need to collaborate with the sales team regarding the best price, verify that she had answered all of the sender's questions, double check her language to ensure that it was polite and professional, and double check her spelling and grammar. She did all of this, she said, "to make sure everything is good, that it's good enough for them to think about it and make decisions."

Sue's Recommendations for EAL Professionals

Sue felt that attending a language training program would be helpful, as it would provide opportunities to practice writing. For employment purposes, she recommended that L2 professionals find ways to learn occupation-specific terminology. She also felt that reading and observing how others write was an important way to develop writing skills, "because only if you have enough input, you can have output." As to the importance of good writing skills, Sue stated that they were essential for everyone, especially with increased communication via messaging and email.

Having provided some background on the five participants and their experiences writing in English, I will now present the findings of the thematic analysis, which should provide further insight on the participants' workplace writing experiences relative to the research questions.

4.2 Results of Thematic Analysis

Before turning to the results of the thematic analysis, I again present the three research questions:

1) What workplace writing challenges are typically experienced by EAL professionals with developing workplace writing skills?
2) What strategies are employed to fulfill on-the-job writing expectations?
3) In what ways are workplace writing tasks facilitated using technology?

Through the thematic analysis, I identified a total of 229 idea units, which I categorized as workplace writing challenges (n=21, Table 3), general writing strategies (n=56, Table 6), technology-based strategies (n=24, Table 7). Additional emerging themes were related to the development of workplace writing skills and categorized as

such (n=128, Table 9). The findings for each research question are discussed first, followed by a presentation of the additional themes/sub-themes that emerged from the thematic analysis.

4.2.1 Results for Research Question 1

This section presents answers to RQ1: *What workplace writing challenges are typically experienced by EAL professionals with developing workplace writing skills?* Table 3 presents the findings for workplace writing challenges (n=21), which accounted for approximately 9% of the total idea units (n=229). Sub-themes included language-based (n=14), culturally-based (n=4), social (n=1) and technology-based challenges (n=2). The percentage for each sub-theme is relative to the main theme: challenges (n=21).

Table 3

Themes Responding to RQ1

Strategies Theme	**Idea Units** (n=21)	9.17%	
Sub-theme	N	%	See examples of the four sub-themes below.
Language-based	14	66.7	"The first time I write a sentence, most of the time it's correct. And maybe I have a doubt sometimes, or maybe I'm not so sure that I'm right and when I read it again, and I try to fix it, I make it worse." (Carlos, I)
Culturally-based	4	19	"I wrote this email and… it was too aggressive… because different countries, different cultures." (Marina, I)
Social	1	4.8	"But I want to mention that people with English as the first language… it seems like they don't like [mentoring newcomers]... Not only in the same company, but with different teams I experienced that. And right now working in Canada it's sad to say but it's still, I think, the same." (Victor, I)
Technology-based	2	9.5	"So, I feel like there are a lot of problems with [Google Translate], not properly translate what I want to say. Because, it's like, wild [laugh]. (Marina, I)

Note. Total idea units from interview, think-aloud, and follow-up data = 229. Total idea units for the challenges sub-themes = 21 units. Percentage of theme (challenges) is relative to the total idea units. Percentage of each sub-theme is relative to the total idea units for the theme (n=21). I=Interview

Language-based Challenges

Table 4 presents the participants' questionnaire responses in relation to language-based challenges. The total questionnaire responses (n=24) are located in Appendix E.

Table 4

Frequency of Language-based Challenges

Participant	spelling	grammar	punctuation	organization	general English vocabulary	occupation-specific English vocabulary	length of writing	conciseness	informal writing	formal writing	awareness of target audience	other challenges
Marina	6	6	6	4	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	5
Victor	4	6	6	4	6	6	6	4	3	5	5	6
Anastasia	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Carlos	2	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	3	3	3	3
Sue	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	3	1

Notes. 0=never, 6=always. Refer to Appendix E for all of the responses (n=24).

The five participants reported the following language-based challenges: conciseness (n=1), evaluating writing (n=4), length of writing (n=2), negative transfer from L1 to L2 (n=4), understanding spoken instructions (n=1), and vocabulary issues (=2). The language-based challenges (n=14) accounted for about 66% of all of the workplace writing challenges. Listed below are comments related to each of the language-based challenges, to add to the examples provided (Table 3). To maintain consistency with the data reported in the tables throughout this chapter, I=interview, TA=Think-aloud, and F=Follow-up.

Conciseness

Marina expressed concern about her habit of writing lengthy emails and acknowledged that her writing needed to be more concise.

"But I can see that I have problems, that I write big emails." (Marina, referring to TA#8, writing an email to the boss to inquire about funding for training)

Evaluating Writing

Three participants expressed some frustration about knowing when to stop evaluating their writing, that is, discerning when a particular task was suitable in terms of language and content, for delivery to its intended audience. Anastasia, Carlos, and Victor indicated that this posed a challenge for them at times, to various degrees.

> "You can't really stop because... I find, like, the most challenging part for me is to stop changing [laugh]... improving. So what I say to myself... I just have a goal where I say, okay... I change no more than three times, for example. Three times, and I send. I just say stop to myself... stop, just stop changing. You're perfect. Just go ahead and send it. Yeah, I think this is the challenging part... when to stop." (Anastasia, referring to TA#4, writing a short report on professional development options)

> "Yes, if I'm alone, I read it aloud. If not, in silence. Not too often, not too many times, because as I said, I mentioned it before, sometimes the first time is correct. Then I read three or four times, I change the order of the words, I send the email, and after five minutes, I read the email again and I say, oh my God, there's an error [laugh]." (Carlos, I)

> "And when I still have some doubts**,** I just simply look at parts of the phrases or what I need to... let's say, make it look better or to find what I think is still not good. So I'm still looking for it**.** This is what I do." (Victor, I)

Length of Writing

Length of writing posed difficulties for Sue and Carlos, who reported that they had occasionally faced challenges performing longer than typical writing tasks.

> "At first, it may take a very long time to write a very long email." (Sue, I)

> "Workplace writing tasks are more simple and I can use short sentences and bullet points. On the other hand, external reports or letters require more extensive lexicon and much elaborated syntax. For that reason it is more challenging for me when I have to write long essays, letters or reports." (Carlos, F)

Negative Transfer from L1 to L2

Negative transfer can occur when translations from one language to another fail to produce the desired meaning in the target language, due to differences in the structures of the languages or as a result of vocabulary that cannot be directly translated. Anastasia, Victor, and Carlos reported the following challenges related to translation and structural errors.

> "But I find it very, very difficult because the way I structure writing in my first language is different from English. That's why it was very difficult at the beginning for me to write in English, and my managers had to correct me... all the time." (Anastasia, I)
>
> "The sentence structure is different, and also sometimes there are different meanings if you translate. In this case you will need to rewrite, because there is no such phrase in English." (Anastasia, F)
>
> "Sometimes, I want to express an idea or communicate something and I do not consider that maybe I shouldn't try to make my own translation. As in [my L1], my first language, there are in English, certain expressions that are not exactly meaning the same when using a literal translation." (Victor, F)
>
> "Also, my brain is set up to write in [my L1] and both languages are totally different." (Carlos, F)

Understanding Spoken Instructions

When instructions are provided verbally rather than in writing, this may pose difficulties, as Anastasia reported.

> "Other language challenges are accent of different people. Sometimes they mean not exactly what you think. In this case it is better to rephrase and ask in your words, so they can understand what you are going to deliver." (Anastasia, F)

Vocabulary Issues

It was clear from the participants' reports that they all experienced challenges with vocabulary in varying degrees.

> (Referring to seeking feedback on language errors) "I have come across a really difficult situation because I have said something or pronounced a word totally different, and people started staring at me, saying, oh my God, what did he just

say? Because maybe they didn't understand me or maybe I said something bad." (Carlos, I)

(Giving examples of vocabulary that occasionally presented challenges) "Words, expressions or slang use in a specific field or company." (Victor, F)

Culturally-based Challenges

Four comments were culturally-based:

"I wrote this email and… it was too aggressive… because different countries, different cultures." (Marina, I)

"…but when I work, Canadian people, they are so polite...they never tell me my mistakes, but I need this." (Marina, I)

"…people don't like to tell you that you did something wrong. Because, you know, here in Canada, everyone's polite." (Carlos, I)

(Regarding the comment during his interview, "The language is a monster") "I was referring to the hard experience that is to face another language, another country, new people, new 'rules,' new customs; for adults coming from places with different first languages." (Victor, F)

Social Challenges

The following comment, a portion of which was presented in Table 3, was expressed by Victor.

"I cannot say that I had, or I have a mentor because unfortunately, I have to say it... probably it's not part of this study. But I want to mention that people with English as the first language, it doesn't matter the country where I am, it seems like they don't like it…Yeah, colleagues. Not only in the same company, but with different teams I experienced that. And right now working in Canada it's sad to say but it's still, I think, the same. I mean, I can see this is the same. There's... I don't know if this can be a kind of discrimination or... I'm not sure what it can be, but it's sad because even though when I know that that's everywhere, that still is kicking me a little bit." (Victor, I)

Technology-based Challenges

For the most part, the participants appeared to be quite confident in their use of technology for workplace writing purposes. The only comments that indicated challenges

involved the use of Google Translate and the use of video conferencing software for meetings. The second example below would likely present a similar challenge for many professionals, regardless of their language ability. However, depending on their listening proficiency, L2 professionals might face the added challenge of capturing spoken words while attempting to determine the source.

> "So, I feel like there are a lot of problems with [Google Translate], not properly translate what I want to say. Because, it's like wild [laugh]. I want to say something, but it's translating not properly. But usually it's enough for understanding me." (Marina, I)

> "I take short notes on what each team member replies. And it's important now that we have all these virtual meetings, to know who is speaking. Before, we were able to see a face, now you don't see a face. You just listen to the microphone or to the speaker and sometimes it could be that it's someone that you really don't know. Or there could be too many participants in the meeting and someone says an idea and you don't know, and it's important to know who said it because in the minutes you have to say who said what." (Carlos, referring to TA#6, taking the minutes at an important staff meeting)

4.2.2 Results for Research Question 2

This section addresses RQ2: *What strategies are employed to fulfill on-the-job writing expectations?* The participants' questionnaire responses relevant to strategies used to perform workplace writing tasks are presented below (Table 5). As the questionnaire responses show, the participants used a variety of strategies to meet workplace writing expectations. The total questionnaire responses (n=24) are located in Appendix F.

Table 5

Strategies Used to Perform Workplace Writing Tasks

Participant	asked for support, guidance, or feedback from coworkers	received mentoring from coworkers, arranged by employer	asked for support, guidance, or feedback from supervisors	used colleagues' writing as a model	used templates provided by employer	referred to notes, textbooks or other material from courses	used digital tools	used other strategies
Marina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Victor	✓					✓	✓	✓
Anastasia			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carlos	✓		✓	✓			✓	
Sue			✓	✓		✓	✓	

Note. Refer to Appendix F for the total responses (n=24).

The findings in relation to general writing strategies (not specifically related to technology use) will be presented first, followed by strategies specifically involving the use of technology to execute writing tasks. The general strategies used to perform workplace writing tasks have been categorized as follows: applying and/or seeking feedback (n=7), co-writing (n=1), evaluating writing (n=9), minimizing writing (n=4), researching (n=6), structure/organizing (n=9), taking notes (n=1), thinking in English (n=1), translanguaging (n=1), translation (n=5), using samples/modelling (n=7), and using templates (n=5). These general writing strategies (n=56) accounted for 70% of the strategies used to perform workplace writing tasks. Listed below are sample comments related to each of these items, to add to the examples provided in Table 6.

Table 6

Themes Responding to RQ2

Strategies Theme	**Idea Units** (n=80)	34.9%	
Sub-theme	N	%	See examples of general writing strategies below.
General strategies (applying/seeking feedback, co-writing, evaluating writing, minimizing writing, researching, structure/organizing, taking notes, thinking in English, translanguaging, translation, using samples/modelling, using templates)	56	70	"I use bullet points to avoid the risk of errors." (Carlos, I) "…with the boss I used sandwich strategies* like Hello/Dear Boss, how are you, hope you are doing well, I have a question…" (Marina, I) "I just prefer to put it aside. Like, if it's a report, I prefer to put it aside for a little bit so I don't focus on it. I forget. And then I go back, and I reread it." (Anastasia, TA) "…sometimes I refer to other people's emails to find inspiration, to see how can I do it better." (Sue, I) "Ask for feedback from a manager. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback." (Anastasia, I)

Note. Total idea units from interview, think-aloud, and follow-up data = 229. Total idea units for the strategies sub-themes = 80 units. Percentage of theme (strategies) is relative to the total idea units. Percentage of the sub-theme is relative to the total idea units for the theme (n=80). I=Interview, TA=Think-aloud. *sandwich strategies = a type of template

Applying/Seeking Feedback

Although not all of the participants received feedback on their workplace writing tasks, they appeared to appreciate it, and in some cases, they actively sought it.

> "I ask also. I think you should not be ashamed to ask another person, a co-worker. I ask my coworkers, if I say something wrong, if I write something wrong, please tell me. Because sometimes... they don't... people don't like to tell you that you did something wrong. Because, you know, here in Canada, everyone's polite. No, I have told them, don't be polite to me, just tell me because that is the only way I can improve my language skills." (Carlos, I)

> "From time to time, if I have doubts, or I'm not sure of something, even if I sent the document, when I send it out, I try to ask, okay, how do you find it?" (Carlos, TA, referring to TA#6, taking the minutes at an important staff meeting)

> "I had no experience working with these people, especially with this boss, how to write emails properly, and I had to ask questions" (Marina, I)

> "Ask for feedback from a manager. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback. They are very helpful, and they will guide you to whatever you need to improve and what

> they want to see. That's number one. Feedback is very, very important." (Anastasia, I)

Co-writing

Anastasia reported that the assistance and guidance that she had received from her managers as a novice employee was critical in her ability to cope with work-related writing demands and instrumental in her development of workplace writing skills in English.

> "…it was very difficult at the beginning for me to write in English, and my managers had to guide me and correct me--- all the time." (Anastasia, I)

Evaluating Writing

All of the participants indicated that evaluating their writing for errors was a critical part of the writing process, and they each had their own way of checking for errors, as some of these examples from the transcripts show.

> "Yes, it would be better if I have time for checking, I would prefer checking about my tone and my manner and for mistakes. I prefer all the time checking." (Marina, referring to TA#8, writing an email to the boss to inquire about funding for training)

> "And then what I would do... I would do spellcheck. I would do proofread. I would probably put that aside for a little bit, and then come back and proofread it again. Just to make sure that everything I have there makes sense. And then I would submit." (Anastasia, referring to TA#4, writing a short report on professional development options)

> "Usually it is proof read several times before submitting. I can think of one thing is typos in names and numbers that is very important and needs to be triple checked." (Anastasia, F, referring to TA#4, writing a short report on professional development options)

> "And before I finish, I read whatever I have written two, three times." (Carlos, I)

> "And after I finish writing, I always--- I need to double check first if I have used all the--- if I'm very polite and professional, if I've used words like 'thank you for your time' or 'look forward to working with you,' things like that. And I will double check my spelling to see if everything is correct. Sometimes I use the auto correction function from the email. And also double check that I have answered all the questions, because most of the time they have multiple questions apart

> from the product, like when it will be available, when can it be shipped, when am I expected to receive it. So to make sure everything is good, that it's good enough for them to think about it and make decisions." (Sue, referring to TA#2, writing a reply email to a potential customer)

Minimizing Writing

Carlos, who appeared to dislike writing, had developed the practice of writing only as much as needed in order to reduce the risk of errors. He emphasized this point several times during the interview and the think-aloud activity. One example, related to using bullet points, has already been provided in Table 6.

> "My strategy is, I write short sentences, short emails, direct and concise. And I don't elaborate... I don't write long emails with long paragraphs." (Carlos, I)
>
> "If I can say something in four lines, I will say it in any language in four lines." (Carlos, I)
>
> "The minutes is most of the time one page, no more. And remember, my way to write is really in bullet points and I don't really elaborate in long, long paragraphs." (Carlos, referring to TA#6, taking the minutes at an important staff meeting)

Researching

As the examples indicate, research was important and sometimes necessary to perform workplace writing tasks effectively.

> "So number one,.. I would research to see what the available options are and what the outcomes are if they take this course or not. So number one, research, meaning what this course will give to the staff and also the cost associated with that professional development." (Anastasia, referring to TA#4, writing a short report on professional development options)
>
> "I read a lot about what I want to write and check vocabulary. Also I read others material. Check if it is already written." (Anastasia, F)
>
> "When I'm invited to a meeting and I'm asked to write the minutes, first I request what is going to be discussed in the meeting." (Carlos, referring to TA#6, taking the minutes at an important staff meeting)
>
> "I think it is easier to write a letter or email if I have more background information. The more the better." (Sue, F)

Structure/Organizing

Organizing their writing was also an important step in the writing process, as the examples below illustrate.

> "…I ask for a template. Whatever the task is, I ask for the template. If there is no template, I try to Google." (Anastasia, I)

> "Number one, I would write a draft, like 1-2-3... what I want to say first, then in the body, and then what is the conclusion." (Anastasia, referring to TA#4, writing a short report on professional development options)

> "At the end of each subject, I try to do a summary." (Carlos, TA, referring to TA#6, taking the minutes at an important staff meeting)

> "So I would ask the question first, explain why I think the training is good for me. I would say, Dear boss, I found a good training for myself, and give him the details about the training (date, cost, location) and contact information where he could reach me during the time when I'm out of the office…" (Marina, referring to TA#8, writing an email to the boss to inquire about funding for training)

Taking Notes

As is typically done during meetings, one participant mentioned that he took notes when assigned to take the minutes at a staff meeting.

> "I take notes of who's speaking, who is contributing." (Carlos, referring to TA#6, taking the minutes at an important staff meeting)

Thinking in English, Translanguaging, and Translation

One participant made it a point to prepare initial drafts in English, then translate to his L1 to check for accuracy.

> "I write my idea in English, I'm not using Google Translate to translate and being lazy about what I want to say, but I write down the message, the draft in English and I use the tool, I mean Google Translate tool, to see if what I'm supposed to be saying in [my L1] comes with me…" (Victor, TA)

Three participants indicated that translating from their L1 to English—or vice versa, as reported by Victor (to confirm the accuracy of drafts initially produced in English)—was one of the steps in their writing process.

> "Everything that I know in [my L1] I have to translate it to English." (Anastasia, I)

> "So I just use Google Translate, for me it's really important because often I lose the words what I need to say." (Marina, I)

Using Samples/Modelling

Samples of writing, produced by their employer or composed by their colleagues, were adapted by the participants for their own use.

> "…any process document, any document I come across in my workplace, I like to read it. I like to cheat a bit... if I make a copy or if I... because if I know all the process documents, all the documentation that we have a record of... If I want to create a new one, sometimes I use an old one as a template or a reference. If I receive an email where the person wrote something really in a nice way, I keep a copy of the email for future reference, if I want to tell someone something similar." (Carlos, I)

> "And sometimes if I feel I cannot express what I'm thinking very well, I refer to other people's emails... Sometimes, I check out other people's emails to see how they expressed it, what did they write in order to express the same idea. So sometimes I refer to other people's emails to find inspiration, to see how I can do it better" (Sue, I)

> "When I worked, I tried to follow how people write emails, and just, like, copy but put my ideas." (Marina, I)

Using Templates

To assist with their writing, the participants used templates prepared by their employer or created their own.

> "So number one, I ask for a template. Whatever the task is, I ask for the template." (Anastasia, I)

> "There are some emails that are always similar, so I use templates. Sometimes I use templates because some things are always the same... you just change the name or change the number." (Sue, I)

> "I would say that I obviously use the tools in each workplace as the drafts or, how do you call them, the forms that are already there... the templates the department was using." (Victor, I)

In this section, I have presented the results in terms of general workplace writing strategies, that is, workplace writing strategies not specifically related to the use of technology. Presented in the next section are the results for the technology-based strategies used by the participants to facilitate workplace writing tasks.

4.2.3 Results for Research Question 3

This section addresses RQ3: *In what ways are workplace writing tasks facilitated using technology?* Technology-based strategies (n=24) accounted for 30% of all strategies (n=80) used to perform workplace writing tasks. Technology-based strategies involved the use of technology for research, translation, and vocabulary purposes. Technology included the Google search engine, Google Translate, Microsoft applications (spell check features), Grammarly, thesaurus.com, and online dictionaries. Listed in Table 7 are sample comments related to each of these items, to add to the examples provided.

Table 7

Themes Responding to RQ3

Strategies Theme	**Idea Units** (n=80)	34.9%	
Sub-theme	N	%	See examples of technology-based strategies below.
Technology-based strategies	24	30	"I just use whatever tool is in Word to correct the syntax." (Carlos, TA) "Sometimes, when I'm not sure about the terminology, I refer to the [online] dictionary or Google." (Sue, I) "I write…the draft in English and I use Google Translate... and as I said, because I know that Google Translate is not a hundred percent reliable tool, I go to Grammarly…" (Victor, TA)

Note. Total idea units from interview, think-aloud, and follow-up data = 229. Total idea units for the strategies sub-themes = 80 units. Percentage of theme (strategies) is relative to the total idea units. Percentage of the sub-theme is relative to the total idea units for the theme (n=80). I=Interview, TA=Think-aloud

The following excerpts from the transcripts show how the participants used various digital tools to perform workplace writing tasks. One or two examples are listed for each tool mentioned in the transcripts.

Google (search engine)

> "And then, every time I write an email to a new person about a new topic, I google. I google how to write it. What is the proper grammar? What is the proper word?" (Anastasia, I)

Google Translate

> (Referring to TA#4, writing a short report on professional development options) "I use the tool, I mean Google Translate tool, to see if what I'm supposed to be saying in [my L1] comes with me..." (Victor, TA)

> "I cannot live without Google Translate [laugh] because even easy words sometimes just fly from my head and I cannot communicate. So I need Google Translate. Nothing else." (Marina, I)

Microsoft Applications

> "Also when I type in a Word document, there's the tool... it highlights all the wrong words, if you make any syntax error." (Carlos, I)

Grammarly

> (Referring to TA#4, writing a short report on professional development options) "…because I know that Google Translate is not a hundred percent reliable tool, I go to Grammarly, and based on that I'm making the necessary adjustments." (Victor, TA)

Thesaurus.com

> "Well, for writing when I'm at the workplace, I use, what's the name of the website, it's a website for synonyms, it's spelled t-h-e-s-a-u-r-u-s.com." (Victor, I)

Online dictionaries

> "Sometimes, when I'm not sure about the terminology, I refer to the dictionary or Google." (Sue, I)

> (Referring to TA#8, writing an email to the boss to inquire about funding for training) "…maybe [I would use] some dictionaries on the internet…" (Marina, TA)

Having presented the results of the thematic analysis in terms of the three research questions concerning the challenges, strategies, and the use of technology to facilitate workplace writing tasks, I now present additional themes (Table 8) that emerged from the analysis of the interview, think-aloud, and follow-up data.

Table 8

Additional Themes

Initial Themes	**Additional Themes**
Challenges: language-based (related to vocabulary, grammar, etc.), culturally based (related to adapting to cultural norms), social (related to interaction with coworkers) Strategies: general and technology-based strategies for performing workplace writing tasks	Development of L2 workplace writing skills: motivational aspects, social aspects (related to socialization, Communities of Practice (CofP), apprenticeship, Activity Theory, etc.), formal training (education, programs, courses, etc.), experiential learning (real-life experience), self-study

4.2.4 Additional Themes

Additional themes that emerged during the data analysis relate to the development of the participants' workplace writing skills (Table 9). Five sub-themes were identified related to the development of workplace writing skills: motivational aspects of L2 workplace writing development (n=21), social aspects of L2 workplace writing development (n=16), formal training (n=37), experiential learning (n=28), and self-study (n=26). These themes (n=128), accounting for just over 55% of the total idea units (n=229), are worthy of consideration in light of the earlier discussion of the development workplace writing skills, and in terms of their relevance to findings resulting from the extended data analysis that will be presented in the next section. The development of writing skills and associated themes will also be addressed in the discussions of the findings, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

Table 9

Additional Themes (Examples)

Development of Writing Skills Theme	**Idea Units** (n=128)	55.9%	
Sub-themes	N	%	See examples of the five sub-themes below.
1. Motivational aspects	21	16.4	"…in order to compete, we need to be better prepared, with more knowledge, more experience and committed." (Carlos, F) "For English, I think writing is so far my favorite area. I'm very interested in how to make my writing better, and I always like to write. Compared to speaking, I prefer writing." (Sue, I)
2. Social aspects	16	12.5	"You have a lot of co-workers, they send emails, and there are a lot of meetings, communications, you can always learn from them, because they are all in the same company, they are in the same department, they have a lot in common." (Sue, I)
3. Formal training	37	28.9	"First of all, train with a teacher as much as possible because it never is enough studying. Sometimes I think I'll study English all my life [laugh]. So first of all, train as much as possible. Take as many different courses as possible. It even doesn't matter which courses. Just train." (Marina, I)
4. Experiential learning	28	21.8	"…I think it's just practice. You write a lot of emails. Some are very simple, like Thank you, You're welcome, things like that. Some are very complicated. Sometimes you need to write a letter of complaint or a letter of apology... like, explain very complicated things. So I think it's just practice. And over the years... At first, it may take a very long time to write a very long email..." (Sue, I)
5. Self-study	26	20.3	"…whatever you think in your own language, just practice to write in English. And read a lot. And watch... one more thing that improved my writing... maybe it's not connected, but it is connected... it's watching movies in English…" (Anastasia, I) "…keep on doing your own training. It could be YouTube, it could be Grammarly, it could be any website in English. It could be, I don't know [laugh] with songs, everything. But take advantage in a good way of all those free tools that are there online…" (Victor, I)

Note. Total idea units from interview, think-aloud, and follow-up data = 229.Total idea units for the development of writing skills sub-themes = 128 units. Percentage of theme (development of writing skills) is relative to the total idea units. Percentage of each sub-theme is relative to the total idea units for the theme (n=128). I=Interview, F=Follow-up

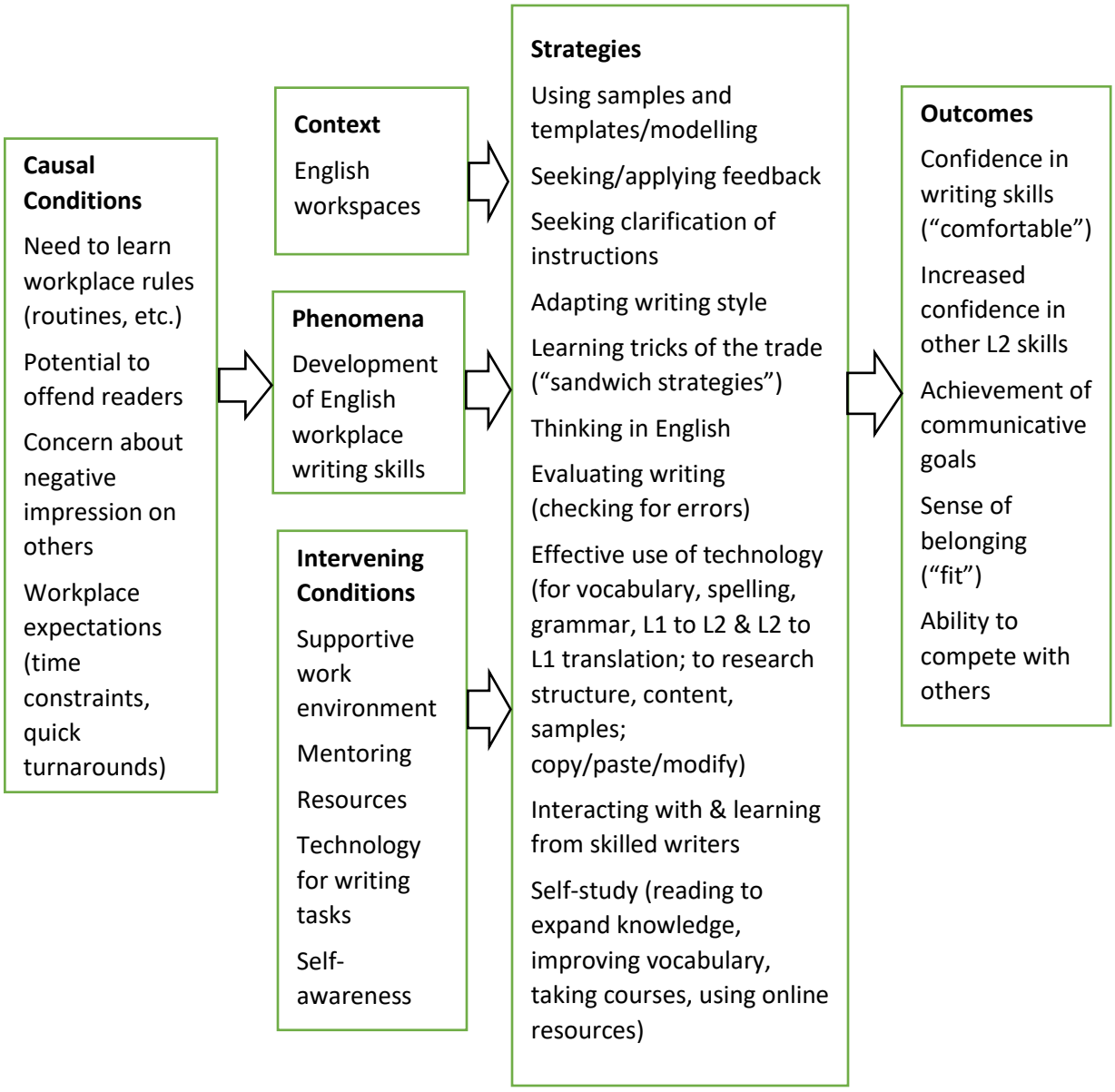
This concludes my presentation of the results from the initial thematic analysis. The findings of the extended data analysis are presented in the following section.

4.3 Results of Extended Data Analysis

Following the initial thematic analysis, I further examined the data using an approach referred to as "interconnecting themes" (Creswell, 2012, p. 252), to show connections between key themes. This approach, based on a coding paradigm proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), resulted in a conceptual model of factors related to the development of the participants' workplace writing skills (Figure 1). The arrows indicate the influences of certain factors upon other factors in the model (Creswell, 2012). Using the guidelines put forth by Creswell (2012), I identified the phenomenon or core category of the study as the development of English L2 workplace writing skills. I also identified causal and intervening conditions, as well as outcomes. Examples of the causal conditions and outcomes can be found in Appendices G and H. The causal and intervening conditions, strategies, and outcomes, consist of themes in the data that were deemed to be most relevant to the phenomenon of the development of English workplace writing skills. The causal conditions are the driving factors influencing the participants' development of their workplace writing skills. Within the context of English workspaces, the intervening conditions bear influence on the strategies, which in turn affect the outcomes.

Figure 1

Interconnecting Themes



Upon further exploration of the data, three factors were determined to be central to the development of the participants' workplace writing skills: (1) motivation, (2) awareness of the role of self, and (3) awareness of the role of others (Figure 2). Each factor is discussed briefly below.

Figure 2

Key Factors in the Development of Workplace Writing Skills

Motivation

The data suggest that the participants were committed to developing their workplace writing skills. Their motivation guided the choices they made concerning their performance of workplace writing tasks and the ongoing development of their writing

skills. With the exception of Sue, who expressed a fondness for writing, they all found workplace writing to be challenging; yet, they appeared to be determined to improve their skills.

Awareness of the Role of Self

The participants appeared to be aware of their limitations. They discussed their challenges unreservedly. Carlos, in particular, stressed the importance of being aware of one's weaknesses and strengths (see Figure 2). Each participant had found ways to compensate for their limitations, especially using the digital tools available to facilitate their writing. Each had made conscious decisions about actions they could take to improve their skills, in the workplace and otherwise. Some of these actions were reported on the questionnaire (Table 10). If there was no support system available to them at work, as in the cases of Marina and Victor, they made use of other resources. They seemed to realize that developing their skills was a process, and not an objective that could be achieved "overnight."

Awareness of the Role of Others

The data show that the participants recognized, to some degree, the role that more experienced and more proficient others might play in their learning. Sue, for instance, emphasized the many opportunities available for her to learn from her colleagues. As a result, the participants actively sought opportunities to receive feedback on their writing at work, if possible; or at the very least, they seemed to appreciate the willingness of others to provide input and expressed some frustration when it was not offered. This was true for Victor as well, whose position as a night auditor entailed working alone, without the support that was available to most of the other participants. Yet they all understood

their success to be dependent to some extent on the efforts of others, even Victor, who worked alone.

Table 10

Efforts to Develop Workplace Writing Skills

Participant	referred to written material at workplace	took an on-site writing class or workshop provided by employer	took an off-site writing course	took an online writing course	attended OSLT, ELT, etc.	attended a general ESL, EAL, or LINC class	practiced writing online (blogging, social media, etc.)	other actions
Marina					✓	✓	✓	
Victor	✓		✓		✓			✓
Anastasia	✓		✓		✓			✓
Carlos	✓				✓		✓	
Sue					✓			✓

Note. Refer to Appendix F for the total questionnaire responses (n=24).

4.4 Summary

This chapter started with profiles and descriptions of the five cases, based on data from the interview, think-aloud, follow-up, and the questionnaire. The descriptions of the five participants focused mainly on their history of learning to write in English and writing for work-related purposes in English, in addition to their feelings about writing relative to their roles at the time of their participation in the study. Following the individual presentations of the five cases, the results of the thematic analysis were presented, for each research question. Examples of the participants' workplace writing challenges and strategies, generally and relative to their use of technology, were excerpted from the interview and think-aloud transcripts, as well as the follow-up data. Additional themes arising from the thematic analysis and related to the development of

the participants' writing skills were then presented, followed by interconnected themes associated with the phenomenon of the development of workplace writing skills. Finally, three factors were presented as being central to the development of the participants' workplace writing skills: motivation, awareness of the role of self, and awareness of the role of others. The next chapter will discuss the above findings in light of the literature.

5 Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine how EAL professionals with developing writing skills manage work-related writing demands. The research questions which guided this study are as follows:

1) What workplace writing challenges are typically experienced by EAL professionals with developing workplace writing skills?
2) What strategies are employed to fulfill on-the-job writing expectations?
3) In what ways are workplace writing tasks facilitated using technology?

This chapter presents a discussion of the results, in light of the findings from the literature review. This discussion will focus on three key themes: challenges, strategies, and factors influencing the development of workplace writing skills.

5.1 Challenges

Depending on the circumstances, employees may be required to consider multiple factors in the writing process, such as choosing a suitable channel of communication or making cautious choices about how to respond in a sensitive situation (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Machili, 2014). Style, tone, and content must be given due consideration in each case (Machili, 2014).

During the think-aloud activity (TA), Sue, whose role was that of a Sales and Trade Coordinator, described the factors she might be required to consider for the task she had selected (TA #2, writing a reply email to a potential customer):

> Yeah, um, before I send the email, I think about the potential customer who has sent the email. Is it a big customer, from a big company? Or is it a small company? Is it from overseas, from an international company? Or domestic company? And also the product or service inquired about--- Is it a very popular

> product or something we have in stock or something we need to make to order? The volume they need is also a very important part--- if they need a big volume the price will be lower; if it's a small volume the price may be higher. Also, is it a one time order or a regular customer, things like that. So during my writing I need to make sure that what I have replied will meet their needs, that I've answered all their questions, because with the products they may need services, when they buy something we need to arrange transportation. Like, international customers need to think about how to transport the stuff, through air, through ocean, or through highway, things like that. And I also need to talk with the sales team to see what's the best way--- what's the best price for them. (Sue, TA)

With genres of workplace writing that vary in tone, style, and register (level of formality), there are choices to be made as well, depending on the intended audience. Consider Anastasia's response during the think-aloud activity, when asked if she would consult anyone for feedback on her selected task (TA #4, writing a short report on professional development options):

> For something like this, probably not. Well, in terms of writing, maybe. It's a very tricky question. Because it really depends where this report goes. If this report goes to a very, very high level, I would ask someone to proofread it for me. If it's just local management who knows me well and understands what I usually say in my writing, I wouldn't because they already know my style; they already know what to expect from me. But if it's somebody new, I would probably cross check it with somebody from my department or management or maybe colleague. It depends. (Anastasia, TA)

Apart from the challenges above, which are faced by both skilled and developing writers, some more specific workplace writing challenges include language-based, culturally-based, and social challenges. The participants in this study reported mostly language-based challenges. These will be discussed in the next section, followed by culturally-based and social challenges. As there was no significant evidence of technology-based challenges, these will not be considered in this chapter.

5.1.1 Language-based Challenges

Some of the participants reported difficulties with various vocabulary and surface-level errors during the interview, think-aloud, and follow-up responses; and the questionnaire responses (Table 4) supported their statements. According to the literature, such errors are typically seen as indicative of language learning (Apelman, 2010; Hu & Hoare, 2017); therefore, this discussion on language-based challenges will focus on other findings, specifically challenges related to conciseness, evaluating writing, length of writing (i.e., performing longer than typical writing tasks), negative transfer from L1 to L2, understanding spoken instructions, and vocabulary issues.

Conciseness

The literature indicates that some L2 professionals experienced difficulties writing with conciseness, brevity, and clarity (Knoch et al., 2016; Du, 2020). This was true for Marina, who expressed concern about her habit of writing "big emails" and acknowledged that this was an area in need of improvement.

Evaluating Writing

One challenge that was mentioned by three participants, but absent from the literature reviewed for the purposes of this study, was the uncertainty of knowing when to stop evaluating one's writing, that is, how to know for certain when a particular task was adequate for delivery to its intended audience. Victor, Anastasia, and Carlos indicated that this posed a challenge for them at times, to various degrees. Anastasia and Carlos were able to seek feedback from more proficient writers, and actively did so when needed; however, Victor, who worked alone, lacked such opportunities.

Length of Writing

In terms of performing longer than typical writing tasks, Carlos reported in a follow-up response that this occasionally posed challenges for him:

> Workplace writing tasks are more simple and I can use short sentences and bullet points. On the other hand, external reports or letters require more extensive lexicon and much elaborated syntax. For that reason it is more challenging for me when I have to write long essays, letters or reports. Also, my brain is set up to write in [my L1] and both languages are totally different. (Carlos, Follow-up)

Negative Transfer from L1 to L2

Like some of the L2 professionals in the literature (Alali, 2019; Bausser, 2000; Du, 2020), Anastasia's initial writing difficulties were largely due to differences between the structures of her L1 and English. Negative transfer may also occur when words or expressions in one language cannot be literally translated into another. In the present study, Marina, Anastasia, and Carlos reported occasional challenges resulting from translation or structural errors.

Understanding Spoken Instructions

Another challenge that was absent from the literature reviewed for this study but worthy of consideration was the ability to understand verbal instructions. Anastasia reported a need to occasionally seek clarification of spoken instructions delivered in different English accents which are prevalent in superdiverse cities like Toronto, where this study was conducted. This difficulty relates to the intertextual nature of workplace writing (Bremner, 2008; Fraiberg, 2013, 2018; Gibb, 2015; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002). As explained by Bremner (2008), "even the planning stage of the writing process involves the invoking of other textual resources" (p. 308). Anastasia's example illustrates

how various literacies (in this case, instructions delivered during a verbal discussion) may need to be drawn upon during the writing process.

Vocabulary Issues

Consistent with the literature (Alali, 2019; Bremner, 2012; Du, 2020; Duff et al., 2000; Faez, 2010; Hu & Gonzales, 2020; Machili, 2014), the five participants in this study indicated that vocabulary occasionally posed challenges for them; however, they seemed to have found ways to cope effectively with this issue, as the later discussion about strategies will show.

5.1.2 Culturally-based Challenges

In the literature reviewed for this study, culturally-based issues generally relate to adapting to unfamiliar genres of writing or modifying language or content to align with cultural norms. Roberts (2010) observed, "…in addition to the socialization processes that all new employees face, relative newcomers are expected to learn to participate in the linguistic and cultural practices of work in a new country" (p. 217).

Four challenges reported by the participants in this study were deemed to be culturally-based. The challenge that most identified with the literature findings (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Artemeva, 1998; Knoch et al., 2016) was Marina's acknowledgment of her need to learn to write with a less aggressive tone, "because different countries, different cultures" (Marina, Interview). The other three challenges identified as culturally-based were associated with receiving feedback from "polite" Canadian co-workers, as reported by Marina and Carlos, and Victor's observation of the challenge faced by adults adapting to a different culture and new ways of doing things, generally.

5.1.3 Social Challenges

Workplace writing is a social act on a variety of levels. (Du, 2020; Duff et al., 2000; Leki et al., 2008; Machili, 2014; Parks, 2016). For instance, the development of workplace writing practices is dependent somewhat upon the degree to which new employees interact with and learn from experienced employees. Additionally, workplace writing tasks sometimes require collaboration with others. In either case, the potential exists for conflict to develop at some point. Machili (2014) found that novice employees occasionally faced workplace integration challenges due to actions deliberately taken by "gatekeepers" (p. 122). Duff and Talmy (2011) and Roberts (2010) concurred.

The only social challenge reported by the participants, which aligned with such workplace integration difficulties in the literature, related to Victor's experiences of feeling unwelcome to seek support from L1 professionals when needed, which had apparently occurred in multiple English workspaces. It is not certain whether these unpleasant experiences were legitimate efforts at "gatekeeping" and/or actual attempts to "limit opportunities for socialization and actively construct resistances to it" (Roberts, 2010, p. 217), but Victor perceived them as such, as one of his interview responses indicated:

> *V:* I cannot say that I had or I have a mentor because unfortunately, I have to say it... probably it's not part of this study. But I want to mention that people with English as the first language, it doesn't matter the country where I am, it seems like they don't like it.
>
> I: When you say they don't like it, do you mean, other coworkers...

> *V:* Yeah, colleagues. Not only in the same company, but with different teams I experienced that. And right now working in Canada it's sad to say but it's still, I think, the same. I mean, I can see this is the same. There's... I don't know if this can be a kind of discrimination or... I'm not sure what it can be, but it's sad because even though when I know that that's everywhere, that still is kicking me a little bit. (Victor, Interview)

5.2 Strategies

In this section, I will discuss the significant findings related to workplace writing strategies in general, followed by the findings regarding technology-based strategies. The general strategies that will be discussed below include applying and/or seeking feedback, co-writing, evaluating writing, minimizing writing, researching, organizing writing, thinking in English, translanguaging, translating, and using templates/samples/modelling.

General Strategies

Applying/Seeking Feedback

As indicated in the literature, a willingness to apply feedback and input from colleagues is helpful, if not critical, in learning workplace writing skills (Apelman, 2010; Arkoudis et al., 2009; Bremner, 2012; Du, 2020; Knoch et al., 2016; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999). The participants generally felt that feedback was a critical factor in the improvement of their writing skills and were willing to actively seek it. Due to working alone at night, Victor did not have this option, but still expressed the value in consulting coworkers for feedback. Marina lamented that her colleagues did not provide feedback on her writing and indicated that she lacked the confidence to seek feedback due to

constraints within her workplace ("I was shy because my boss said that working hours are for work, not anything else…"). Freedman and Adam (1996) reported a similar response from supervisors when asked if learning should be one goal of the tasks assigned to novice employees: "'Hell, NO! They can learn on their own time'" (p. 411). Interestingly, those same supervisors were observed to be "expert masters and mentors; they simply did not think of learning as implicated in the enterprise because it was not their explicit task goal" (Freedman & Adam, 1996, p. 411). Lentz (2013) determined that, apart from ability, time constraints are "the primary driver of poor workplace writing" (p. 484). Although Sue perceived seeking feedback to be a possible indication of incompetence, she acknowledged that her managers were willing to help if approached for support. Carlos and Anastasia seemed to have made it a practice to actively seek feedback on their writing. In this study, Carlos appreciated the feedback provided by his peers, and Anastasia highly valued the correction she received from her managers.

Co-writing

Anastasia recognized that co-writing (mentoring by her managers) enabled her to cope effectively with writing demands; as well, co-writing was instrumental in her development of workplace writing skills in English. The benefits of co-writing are similarly reported in the literature (Apelman, 2010; Hu & Hoare, 2017; Knoch et al., 2016; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999)

Evaluating Writing

During the think-aloud in particular, and occasionally during the interview as well, the five participants indicated that evaluating their writing was an essential final step in the writing process. They had each established a system for checking for errors

(e.g., in tone, grammar, spelling, or overall content), either by proofreading the final texts themselves using digital correction tools or seeking feedback from colleagues. Similar practices were reported briefly by Hu and Gonzales (2020).

Minimizing Writing

One participant, Carlos, reported that he tried to avoid excessive writing that could potentially produce more errors. Hence, he avoided long paragraphs and preferred to write short texts with bullet points whenever possible. In contrast to L2 engineers in one study who avoided writing and resisted feedback (Du, 2020), Carlos highly valued feedback and, as much as he seemed to dislike writing, he accepted that it was an essential skill for his role and could not be avoided altogether.

Researching

During the think-aloud procedure, all of the participants reported that some form of research would typically be the first step in the process of carrying out their selected task. Researching included seeking information, templates, or samples of writing to aid in the writing process. For Carlos, who selected the scenario involving writing minutes for a staff meeting, research entailed asking questions about the purpose for the meeting and finding out about the agenda items; and as Sue said, “I think it is easier to write a letter or email if I have more background information. The more the better” (Sue, Follow-up). These reports of researching as an essential component in the writing process align with those of EAL employees in one study (Hu & Gonzales, 2020), and like some of the other strategies here, it is a typical practice for various forms of writing and for writers in general.

Structure/Organizing Writing

All of the participants provided a structure for the think-aloud task, that is, they verbally outlined the various parts of the task they had selected and indicated how they might proceed in real life, from the beginning to the end of the task, including researching for structure and content if needed. The various references in the literature to the use of templates indicate that structuring or organizing writing is necessary for guiding employees in their performance of writing tasks.

Thinking in English, Translanguaging, and Translation

The literature reveals that multilingual employees often alternated between languages during the writing process (Alali, 2019; Fraiberg, 2013, 2018; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002). Perhaps by necessity due to working independently without access to peer feedback, Victor had developed the habit of writing his initial drafts in English (not "being lazy," as he said during the think-aloud activity), then using the Google Translate tool to translate from English to his L1, to verify whether the texts composed in English carried the same meaning in his native language, and making any necessary adjustments. Similar to some L2 professionals in the literature (Alali, 2019; Apelman, 2010; Fraiberg, 2013; Hu & Gonzales, 2020), Marina and Anastasia appeared to make significant use of digital translation tools (e.g., Google Translate) to translate from their L1 to English.

Using Templates/Samples/Modelling

The use of templates was mentioned in a number of studies (Alali, 2019; Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Apelman, 2010; Arkoudis et al., 2009; Artemeva, 1998; Du, 2020; Hu & Gonzales, 2020), but some authors suggested that they were not necessarily the one-size-fits-all solution that employers believed them to be (Angouri & Harwood, 2008;

Lockwood, 2017; Machili, 2014) Since the participants in this study appeared to benefit from the use of templates, it is possible that the negatives reported in the literature were specific to certain roles, responsibilities, or organizations, or possibly some templates were viewed as inadequate due to their design and degree of applicability within some contexts.

Technology-based Strategies

Twenty-four technology-based strategies were identified relative to the use of technology for research, translation, and vocabulary purposes. Digital tools included the Google search engine, Google Translate, Microsoft applications (spell check features), Grammarly, thesaurus.com, and online dictionaries. All of the participants indicated that they used the Google search engine, and all, except for Sue, reported using Google Translate. Apart from occasional translation errors reported by Marina, and Carlos' challenge taking minutes during virtual meetings, technology did not appear to present any challenges for the participants.

Strategies Absent from Data Analysis Findings

Three strategies reported in the literature review were absent from the findings of the data analysis: i) performing low-stakes writing tasks as a means of orientation and scaffolding; ii) repetition of tasks in order to practice and appropriate new forms of writing; and iii) workplace support initiatives/programs such as on-site or external training or editorial/writing services to aid the participants in the writing process. The participants did not indicate whether any of these items had played a role in their workplace writing experiences. The option to perform low-stakes tasks, as mentioned in the literature review, depends largely on employees' roles and levels of responsibility,

and repetition of writing tasks is a typical practice in many positions. However, it is interesting that, apart from the assistance and feedback given by colleagues, none of the participants reported the availability of workplace initiatives despite these being generally viewed as a valuable means of support for L2 professionals (Alali, 2019; Apelman, 2010; Arkoudis et al., 2009; Knoch et al., 2016).

5.3 Factors Influencing the Development of Workplace Writing Skills

Three factors were identified as bearing influence on the development of the participants' workplace writing skills: (1) motivation, (2) awareness of the role of self, and (3) awareness of the role of others. These factors are discussed in turn in the following sections.

5.3.1 Motivation

Dörnyei (1998) advised caution when considering motivational factors in the language learning process, as "motivation is indeed a multifaceted rather than a uniform factor and no available theory has yet managed to represent it in its total complexity" (p. 131). Thus, while we cannot know for certain the factors that account for the apparent motivation of the participants (apart from the need to write for work-related purposes), the data seem to suggest that they were committed to further developing their workplace writing skills. Dörnyei (1998) stated, "high motivation can make up for considerable deficiencies both in one's language aptitude and learning conditions" (p. 117). Norton Peirce (1995) asserted that motivation is a complex matter which has origins in the field

of social psychology and suggested that second language acquisition (SLA) researchers consider the notion of *investment* instead.

Activity Theory, mentioned in the introduction, is a principle that can be applied here. As quoted earlier, “Transformative agency and willful action are of crucial importance in performing and shaping work” (Engeström & Sannino, 2020, pp. 2-3). The principle of *agency* (Bandura, 1989) would also apply, as would self-efficacy: “People’s self-efficacy beliefs determine their level of motivation, as reflected in how much effort they will exert in an endeavor and how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles” (Bandura, 1989, p. 1176). Regarding self-efficacy, Kohn (2015) stated, “A belief that one belongs in the workplace and can achieve success is highly important to workplace learning and writing” (p. 172).

5.3.2 Awareness of the Role of Self

As suggested by Bremner (2012), learning is most likely to occur when newcomers to a workplace are able to observe, analyze, and reflect on the workplace culture and its practices to gain understanding and to identify opportunities to apply relevant concepts from prior learning. This is closely related to the concept of agency (Bandura, 1989), i.e., taking initiative to seek support, as shown in the studies of interns and newly hired graduates in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009) and francophone nurses in Montreal (Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999). Bandura (1989) explained,

> People anticipate the likely consequences of their prospective actions, they set goals for themselves, and they plan courses of action likely to produce desired outcomes. Through the exercise of forethought and self-regulative standards, they motivate themselves and guide their actions anticipatorily. (p. 1179)

The literature provides additional examples of other initiatives taken by L2 professionals outside of working hours to improve their writing, such as pursuing external training on their own initiative (Machili, 2014), and consulting occupation-specific books and articles to better grasp technical terms and their appropriate usage (Apelman, 2010). The five participants in this study had found various ways to develop their skills further, within and beyond the workplace, e.g., reading workplace and other materials, taking courses, expanding their vocabulary and knowledge, and practicing writing on their own time.

5.3.3 Awareness of the Role of Others

Concerning the development of workplace writing skills, the concepts of socialization, apprenticeship, and situated learning are given considerable attention in the literature (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Arkoudis et al., 2009; Bremner, 2012; Du, 2020; Duff et al., 2000; Knoch et al., 2016; Machili, 2014; Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999). Where novice employees are provided with opportunities to learn from others, they are more likely to develop workplace writing skills and learn the routines and policies of the CofP which is their workplace. However, even in the most accommodating workspaces, writing anxiety can lead to negative coping strategies, such as over relying on the visual presentation of data or avoiding writing as much as possible, which in turn can hamper opportunities to learn from others and to receive valuable, constructive feedback (Du, 2020). Davies and Birbili (2000) declared that the "disturbing and uncomfortable" truth about writing is that it "tends to expose the weakness of our thinking, and the poverty of our expression, to the judgment of others and this becomes

something we would rather avoid" (p. 437). If this is the case even for L1 writers, one can understand why some L2 professionals might find workplace writing intimidating.

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis posited that in low-anxiety contexts, motivated and self-confident language learners, i.e., those with low affective filters and therefore open to input, are more likely to achieve language acquisition success. Brown (2000) stated, "...risk-taking is an important characteristic of successful learning of a second language. Learners have to be able to gamble a bit, to be willing to try out hunches about the language and take the risk of being wrong" (p. 149). This is probably easier to do in the safety of a classroom setting, surrounded by other learners.

The literature indicates that a key factor in writing development is a supportive learning environment in which constructive feedback, input, and encouragement are provided at times of need, as demonstrated by the learning process of the public relations intern in Bremner's case study (2012), by the experiences of various professionals in Australia (Arkoudis et al., 2009) and by francophone nurses in Montreal (Parks, 2000; Parks & Maguire, 1999). Parks and Maguire (1999) repeatedly referred to the opportunities provided to their subjects and the support they received as forms of scaffolding to aid their integration, and observed that this support played a critical role in the development of their writing skills, not to mention the social pressure that all health care professionals typically experience due to the implications of careless or negligent work.

Certainly, the participants in this study were aware of the role that others played in the development of their writing skills. Even those who lacked access to support appeared to value it highly, and although they all may have experienced some anxiety at

first, they gained confidence in their abilities over time and with practice. As Victor reported, “Before I was a bit scared due to my limitations, but after a while... Right now, I feel kind of comfortable with it” (Victor, Interview).

5.4 Summary

This chapter reviewed the findings in light of the literature review, starting with challenges typically faced by the five participants and followed by strategies and factors influencing the development of the participants’ workplace writing skills. First, I considered the workplace writing challenges, which were largely language-based and aligned with examples found in the literature, with the exception of the challenges of evaluating writing and understanding verbal instructions, which were absent from the literature. No significant culturally-based or social challenges were reported; however, one participant reported experiencing exclusion by L1 professionals while employed in English workspaces, which had limited his opportunities for socialization. This constraint was further exacerbated by the fact that his role usually entailed working alone. Second, I discussed the strategies employed by the participants to perform workplace writing tasks. Many of the strategies they used were supported by examples in the literature. Lastly, I reflected upon the factors influencing the development of the participants’ writing skills, specifically, motivation, awareness of the role of self, and awareness of the role of others, all of which were supported by examples in the literature.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine how L2 professionals with developing workplace writing skills manage work-related writing demands in an EAL context. The study was guided by three research questions aiming to gain insight as to the workplace writing experiences of five L2 professionals employed in workspaces in an English as an Additional Language (EAL) context, namely Toronto, Canada. The findings showed that the participants could not have developed the confidence and ability to write effectively in isolation from other workplace practices; furthermore, the learning of workplace writing skills was usually facilitated when valuable input was provided by others on an ongoing basis. Some challenges, such as evaluating their writing, were harder to overcome than others. Clearly, correction and translation tools are helpful only to a certain degree. For most of the participants, workplace writing instruction and support were not only essential to easing their integration into English workspaces; it was also a long term need. The findings also showed that the participants used different strategies to cope with the challenges they faced while performing various workplace writing tasks in English. Three factors appeared to account for the development of their workplace writing skills: (1) motivation, (2) an awareness of the role of self, and (3) an awareness of the role of others. This concluding chapter presents the implications of this study for language training and employers in EAL contexts, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Implications for Language Training

With regard to the role of instruction, the literature on L2 workplace writing offers an abundance of pedagogical recommendations, many of which emphasize strategies aimed at equipping developing writers to seek out their own workplace mentors and be agents of their own learning in English or English–dominant workplaces. Evidently, many of these recommendations have already been implemented: various reports indicate that, for at least a decade, occupation-specific language training programs and other initiatives designed to prepare EAL and other immigrant professionals for employment in Canada, such as those produced by the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (2011), have made it a point to provide such instruction (Derwing & Waugh, 2012; Drolet et al., 2014). Thus, workplace writing instruction is already being provided successfully for L2 professionals in some EAL contexts: such training proved beneficial to the five participants, most of whom indicated that other forms of instruction had not prepared them to write for work-related purposes. If I were to suggest any improvements in terms of instruction, learners would benefit from training on the efficient use of technology for composing and for evaluating their writing for errors, to the extent that digital tools can be leveraged for that purpose. To further empower L2 professionals, especially those in EAL contexts, writing instruction should also include translanguaging practices. Additionally, IEPs who are accustomed to more hierarchical work settings should be prepared to receive guidance from all skilled co-workers, regardless of their role and level of responsibility (Freedman & Adam, 1996).

Apart from the difficulty of simulating real-life writing practices in a classroom, the effectiveness of such training depends to some degree on the practical knowledge and

experiences of instructors, and the extent to which they are perceived as knowledgeable about real-life workplace writing practices by the professionals they serve. In my own experience, while teaching workplace writing to internationally educated hospitality, engineering, accounting, financial services and other professionals, at some point I became very conscious of my limitations. Realizing that I could not teach what I did not know, I sought to provide my clients with insight from the perspective of others with inside knowledge of their sectors. Some language training programs already have such provisions in place, with varying degrees of effectiveness. Those which do not, should strongly consider involving more sector-specific writing experts and supplying them with explicit curriculum expectations, with the objective of providing program participants with insight into authentic workplace writing practices. By doing so, the providers of these programs will better equip EAL professionals for real-life workplace writing scenarios. In terms of traditional postsecondary education, I am not certain that workplace writing instruction can or should be expected of faculty at institutes of higher learning, unless they are skilled in today's business communication practices in non-academic work settings, which can be considerably more challenging for L2 workers, for reasons already discussed. In the same way that such many institutions offer career guidance workshops, perhaps they could offer or even require some form of workplace preparation training, provided by business communication experts, for all students, L1 and L2, prior to internships or graduation.

Lastly, workplace language training programs and mentoring partnerships between education providers and employers, both of which already exist, offer a means of gaining the skills to meet workplace writing demands. I would suggest that more of these

arrangements are needed. Job shadowing opportunities are another option, if they can be arranged in spite of confidentiality concerns.

6.2 Implications for Employers

With regard to other stakeholders, I support the idea of language training providers forming mentoring partnerships with employers (Kohn, 2015). One of the objectives of the government-funded, occupation-specific language training program in which I worked for several years was to provide its clients with a six-week placement with an employer in their chosen field. While there were varying degrees of success with this component of the program, clients largely found the experience beneficial in terms of gaining local experience and references; and occasionally, they received an offer of employment. By ensuring that such programs are available to internationally educated professionals with language instruction needs, the government of Canada has demonstrated its commitment to their professional success, but perhaps employers could take a more active role in the process.

As workplaces are increasingly being recognized as official places of learning, and as the need is seen for the development of a workplace pedagogy (Billett & Choy, 2013), it may be that the time has come for more employers in EAL contexts to provide language support to L2 professionals, especially as organizations have become more and more linguistically diverse due to migration flows influenced by globalization (Roberts, 2010). These initiatives are already provided by some employers, but usually on a short-term basis. What seems clear is that supporting the writing needs of EAL workers should be a joint, long-term effort between employers and training providers. At the very least, more employers in EAL contexts might consider heightening the awareness of skilled

writers to the needs of novice employees, especially those for whom English is an additional language, and actively arranging co-writing or mentoring opportunities. While some of the participants' employers took an active role in this regard, others appeared to be less forthcoming, possibly unaware of the need for such support or unsure what form it should take (Drolet et al., 2014).

Attention to workplace writing issues is generally awarded low priority by employers due to time constraints and other reasons (Davies & Birbili, 2000; Lentz, 2013), but with increased linguistic diversity in EAL workspaces, it may be time for this to change. A recent study conducted in a U.K.-based call center provides an example of language instruction brought into an English workspace to provide training for L2 employees (Woydack & Lockwood, 2020). Additionally, Lentz (2013) found that employees were incentivized to write well when their employers placed a high value on writing, which was evident by the provision and sometimes the requirement of writing training for all staff.

In summary, preparing EAL professionals to effectively meet workplace writing expectations requires more partnerships between training providers and employers. I have suggested only a few forms that this might take. The findings of this study show that, for the five participants, workplace writing skills could not be developed in isolation from other workplace practices; furthermore, the learning of workplace writing skills was usually facilitated when valuable input was provided to aid in the improvement of the participants' writing skills. While the participants proved themselves to be capable of learning to cope effectively with workplace writing demands over time, even in the absence of assistance, workplace writing support would likely have reduced the learning

curve for them (Leki et al., 2008; Li, 2000; Roberts, 2010) and eased their integration into English workspaces.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study. First, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to the workplace writing experiences of other EAL professionals due to the small number of participants. Second, because the workplace writing experiences were not varied enough, the data did not contain enough diverse examples of challenges, strategies, and technology use, which was what I had hoped to achieve at the start of this project. If not for the difficulties recruiting participants, I may have achieved the goal of a more diverse range of workplace writing experiences. Third, the participants all considered themselves to be good to fairly good writers in their L1, and from their accounts, most of them appeared to be confident in their ability to communicate their ideas in English. As this was the case, they likely did not experience the same challenges or feel the need to use strategies that might be employed by less capable L2 writers. It may therefore have been more revealing to explore the perspectives of L2 professionals who were not as advanced in their English workplace writing experience, to gain different insights on their workplace writing challenges and strategies. Finally, to get a clear understanding of what people actually do at work, it is better to observe them in their workplaces (Roberts, 2010; Griffee, 2018). In this research, for example, while there were many consistencies among the various forms of data, some responses to the questionnaires were not reflected in the interview and think-aloud data. However, even with approval to conduct research in the participants' places of work, this may not have

been possible due to time constraints and due to the pandemic that coincided with the study.

6.4 Implications for Further Research

This study has contributed to the need for additional research on the workplace writing experiences of L2 professionals with developing workplace writing skills, employed in English workspaces in English as an Additional Language contexts. It has highlighted the workplace writing challenges experienced and strategies used by five EAL professionals employed in English workspaces in Toronto, Canada, and provided some insight into factors influencing the development of their L2 workplace writing skills. The need for more studies on workplace writing by L2 employees in EAL contexts is not new, but much prior research has evolved from a primarily pedagogical focus (Parks 2016). To add to existing suggestions of a more pedagogical nature, I believe it would be valuable to explore the ways in which instructors prepare L2 professionals to communicate effectively in real-world writing tasks, using technology-based learning activities and translanguaging practices, especially the most effective methods for evaluating writing. Furthermore, it would be helpful to know what measures instructors can take, if any, to assess for learning transfer, thus facilitating the integration of L2 professionals and ensuring greater success. Finally, research efforts might focus on the collaboration between language training providers and workplace writing experts to ensure that instructors' learning activities hold real-world value for their learners.

With respect to further studies in work settings, the findings of research in bilingual (English/French) workspaces in Canada, where writing is performed in both of the country's official languages, would be especially enlightening. There also remains a

need for more research on technology use for workplace writing purposes, especially more dynamic forms of computer-mediated communication, which may present unique challenges for L2 professionals with developing workplace writing skills. Such research would provide insights not only for these individuals, but also for those who instruct and employ them. Finally, since employers are viewed as playing a key part in the settlement process, there is an increasing need for more research focused on their role in the effective integration of immigrant professionals in EAL workspaces. Further endeavours might additionally consider the role of proficient L1 and L2 colleagues in EAL work settings and the extent to which their actions hinder or aid the development of L2 professionals' workplace writing skills and their integration in EAL work settings. In conclusion, it is hoped that others will see the value in further exploration of the workplace writing experiences of this segment of the population in English as an Additional Language contexts.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1) What experience do you have performing workplace writing tasks in your first language?
2) What experience do you have performing workplace writing tasks in English?
3) What strategies have you used to perform workplace writing tasks in English?
4) In what ways have you used technology to perform workplace writing tasks?
5) What has helped you to develop your workplace writing skills? (if needed, suggest examples: workplace experience, mentoring, business English classes or language training programs)
6) What recommendations do you have for other ESL professionals to improve their workplace writing skills prior to employment?
7) What recommendations do you have for other ESL professionals to improve their professional writing skills after finding employment?

Appendix B

Think-aloud Activity

Choose one of the scenarios. Reflect on the steps that you would be most likely to take during the writing process (before, during, and after writing). You do not need to write anything, but if you think it would be helpful, you may take some notes.

1) You have been asked to write a memo for the staff in your department.

2) You are writing a reply email to a potential customer who has enquired about a product or service.

3) You are writing an external email to a client or customer.

4) You have been asked to write a short report on the professional development options available to staff in your department or company.

5) You have been asked to review a company that supplies products or services to your company or department, to determine whether there is a more cost-effective option.

6) You are required to take the minutes at an important staff meeting.

7) You have been asked to identify potential suppliers of a new service or product, and prepare a report comparing the pros and cons of each company.

8) You want to inform your boss about an external PD/training opportunity and inquire about funding to attend the training.

Appendix C

Questionnaire

- Do you currently perform or have you ever performed any workplace writing tasks in English? [*required*]

☐ Yes

☐ No

[*IF NO: "Unfortunately, you are not eligible for this study. Thank you for your interest."*]

- What is your level of proficiency in writing, according to your most recent assessment or test score? [*required*]

☐ Lower than CLB 6 or IELTS 5.5

☐ At least CLB 6 or IELTS 5.5

[*If first option is selected: "Unfortunately, you are not eligible for this study. Thank you for your interest."*]

Part I

Workplace Writing Tasks

Please select the types of workplace writing tasks that you perform most frequently in English. Select 0 for tasks that you have never performed.

	Least						Most
N/A	Frequent						Frequent
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- Internal emails (to colleagues, managers, etc.)
- External emails
- Memos
- Meeting minutes
- Internal informational reports (travel reports, sales reports, progress/status reports, summary reports, incident reports, etc.)
- Internal analytical/persuasive reports (recommendation reports, problem-solving reports, etc.)

- Technical reports (for technical purposes or scientific research)
- External reports
- Proposals (sales proposals, requests for funding, etc.)
- Presentation materials (slides, handouts, etc.)
- Web-based writing (chats, blogs, social media, etc.)
- Collaborative/team writing projects
- Handwritten notes (for colleagues, managers, etc.)
- Letters (to other businesses)
- Letters (to individual customers/clients)
- Other tasks

Part II

Workplace Writing Tasks: Challenges

Please rank the challenge level of the workplace writing tasks listed below. Select 0 for tasks that you have never performed in English.

	Not					Extremely	
N/A	Challenging					Challenging	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- Internal emails (to colleagues, managers, etc.)
- External emails
- Memos
- Meeting minutes
- Internal informational reports (travel reports, sales reports, progress/status reports, summary reports, incident reports, etc.)
- Internal analytical/persuasive reports (recommendation reports, problem-solving reports, etc.)
- Technical reports (for technical purposes or scientific research)
- External reports
- Proposals (sales proposals, requests for funding, etc.)
- Presentation materials (slides, handouts, etc.)
- Web-based writing (chats, blogs, social media, etc.)
- Collaborative/team writing projects
- Handwritten notes (for colleagues, managers, etc.)
- Letters (to other businesses)
- Letters (to individual customers/clients)
- Other tasks

Part III

Language-based Challenges

Select the language-based challenges that you experience most frequently when performing workplace writing tasks in English. Select 0 for challenges that you have never experienced.

	Least						Most
N/A	Frequent						Frequent
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Organization
- General English vocabulary
- Occupation-specific vocabulary
- Length of writing tasks (Does difficulty increase depending on the length of the task?)
- Conciseness (avoiding wordiness)
- Informal writing (for example, conversational style with a familiar audience)
- Formal writing (for example, letters, reports, proposals, etc.)
- Awareness of target audience (adapting writing for different readers)
- Other challenges

Part IV

Workplace Writing Strategies

Select all of the strategies that you have used to perform workplace writing tasks in English.

- ❑ I have asked for support, guidance, or feedback from co-workers when needed.
- ❑ I have received mentoring from one or more co-workers, arranged by my employer.
- ❑ I have asked for support, guidance, or feedback from supervisor(s) when needed.
- ❑ I have used the writing of my colleagues as a model for my own writing.
- ❑ I have used templates provided by my employer for staff use.
- ❑ I have referred to notes, textbooks, or other material from courses I attended.
- ❑ I have used digital tools such as grammar and spellcheck software (MS Word or other software), or Google (for definitions, translations, etc.).
- ❑ I have used other strategies not listed above.
- ❑ I have used none of these strategies.

Part V

Continuous Learning/Improvement

Select all of the actions that you have taken to develop your English workplace writing skills.

- ❑ I have referred to written material at my workplace.
- ❑ I have taken an on-site writing class provided by my employer.
- ❑ I have taken an off-site business writing class.
- ❑ I have taken an online business writing course.
- ❑ I have attended an occupation-specific language training program (OSLT, ELT, etc.)
- ❑ I have attended a general ESL, EAL, or LINC class.
- ❑ I have practiced writing by blogging, participating in online forums, or using social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.).
- ❑ I have taken other actions not listed above.
- ❑ I have taken none of these actions.

Part VI

General Information

Please complete the following section.

- Other than English, what languages do you speak?
- How long have you lived in Canada?
- What is your highest level of education? (less than high school, high school, post-secondary (diploma or certificate program), university (undergraduate degree), university (graduate degree), other education not listed)
- How well can you write in your own language? (very well, fairly well, average, not very well)
- How much international experience do you have (outside Canada)?
- How much Canadian work experience do you have?
- In total, how much experience do you have working in English?
- What is your current or most recent sector of employment? (engineering, accounting, financial services, IT, education, healthcare, sales and marketing, customer service, administration, hospitality, other (please specify))
- What is your current or most recent role?
- What is your current or most recent level of responsibility? (entry-level, intermediate, senior)
- What is the size of your current or most recent employer (approximate number of staff)? (0 to 4, 5 to 99, 100 to 499, over 500)
- In your current or most recent role, approximately what percentage of a typical work shift is/was spent writing in English? (under 25%, 25% to 50%, 50% to 75%, over 75%)
- In your current or most recent role, approximately what percentage of a typical work shift is/was spent speaking English? (under 25%, 25% to 50%, 50% to 75%, over 75%)

- What is your gender?
- What is your age? (18 to 25, 26 to 35, 36 to 45, 46 to 55, over 55, prefer not to say)

To submit your responses, please read the instructions below.

Please enter the e-mail address where you would prefer to be contacted after you submit this questionnaire. This e-mail address will be used to contact you for the interview and the think-aloud procedure. You will be contacted within one week after you submit this questionnaire. Results of the study (questionnaire, interview, and think-aloud procedure) will also be sent to this e-mail address.

Please enter your e-mail address. _____

Would you like to receive the results of the study after the analysis of the data?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Thank you for your participation. If you know any ESL professionals (living in Canada) who might be interested in participating in this research, please send them the link to this survey or have them contact the Researcher for more information at [*email address*].

Appendix D

Profiles of Questionnaire Respondents (n=24)

Gender	**Languages**	**Sectors**	**Levels of Responsibility**
Female (n=9) Male (n=15)	Arabic, Azeri, Cantonese, Chinese, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Mandarin, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Saraiki, Sinhala, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese	financial services, engineering, education, skilled trades, information technology, retail, accounting, business, hospitality, real estate	Entry-level (n=2) Intermediate (n=15) Senior (n=7)
Age Range			**Size of Employer**
26 to 35 (n=3) 36 to 45 (n=12) 46 to 55 (n=6) over 55 (n=2) prefer not to say (n=1)		**Roles/Positions** financial analyst, postdoc researcher, technical service engineer, electrician, senior software engineer, department manager, supply chain manager, project engineer, finance manager, night auditor, accountant, business consultant, financial advisor, self-employed, software automation developer, data analyst, sales and trade coordinator, technical representative assistant	0 to 4 (n=3) 5 to 99 (n=8) 100 to 499 (n=4) 500+ (n=9)
Level of Education	**International Work Experience**		**% of typical shift spent writing in English**
undergraduate degree (n=7) graduate degree (n=15) post-secondary diploma or certificate (n=1) other (n=1)	2 years to 30 years **Length of Residence in Canada** 4 months to 15 years **Canadian Work Experience** 0 to 10 years **Experience Working in English** 10 months to 25 years		under 25% (n=8) 25% to 50% (n=4) 50% to 75% (n=7) over 75% (n=5) **% of typical shift spent speaking English** under 25% (n=6) 25% to 50% (n=3) 50% to 75% (n=7) over 75% (n=8)

Appendix E

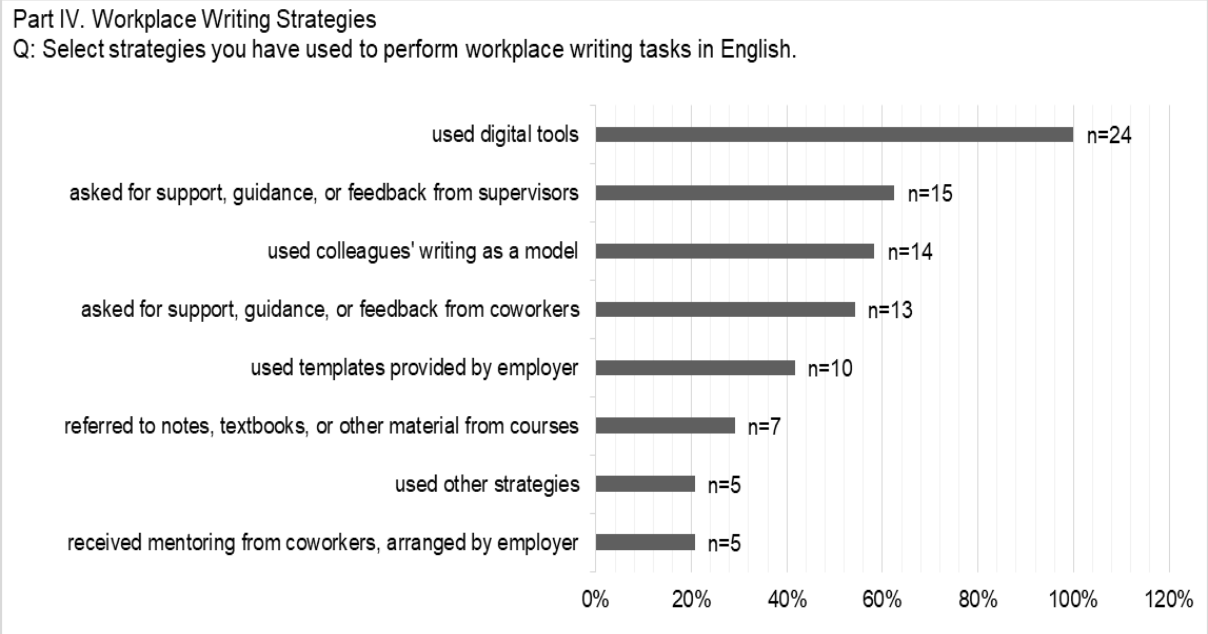
Questionnaire Responses (n=24)

Part III. Frequency of Language-based Challenges

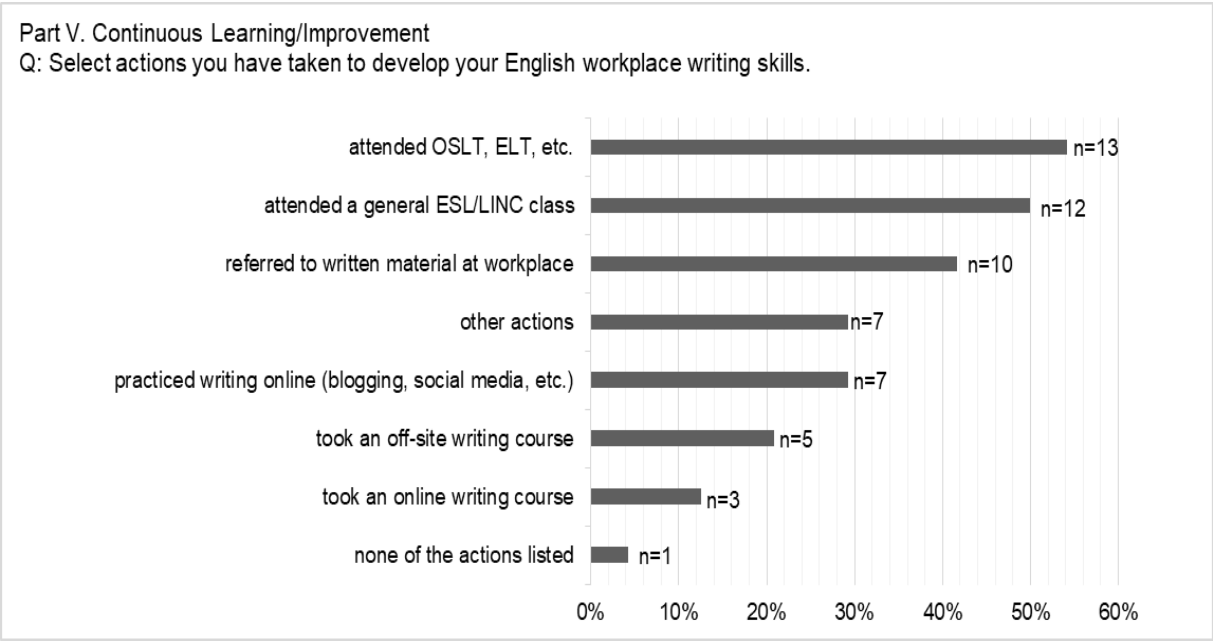
Challenge	6 Always	5 Very Frequently	4 Frequently	3 Sometimes	2 Rarely	1 Very Rarely	0 Never	Missing*
spelling	3	8	5	1	2	3	2	
grammar	5	8	4	2	3	2		
punctuation	6	3	3	7	3	2		
organization	2	3	9	4	6			
general English vocabulary	2	7	3	6	3	3		
occupation-specific English vocabulary	4	3	5	5	4	2		1
length of writing	3	5	6	8	1	1		
conciseness		7	8	4	3	2		
informal writing		5	4	8	4	3		
formal writing	3	7	5	6		3		
awareness of target audience	3	7	6	4		1	2	1
other challenges	2	5	3	8	1	2	1	2

Note. *Missing responses. Responses from total questionnaire respondents (n=24).

Appendix F



Note. Responses from all questionnaire respondents (n=24). No responses were submitted for *I have used none of these strategies*.



Note. Responses from all questionnaire respondents (n=24). No responses were submitted for *I have taken an on-site writing class or workshop provided by my employer*.

Appendix G

Causal Conditions Influencing the Development of L2 Workplace Writing Skills

Causal Conditions	Example
Need to learn workplace rules and routines	"…each job is specific, and we need to learn some rules" (Marina, I)
Potential to offend readers	"…sometimes we can abuse someone, right?" (Marina, I)
Concern about negative impression on others	"I wrote this email and just asked my husband to just see if everything was alright because I didn't want my manager to laugh at me." (Marina, I) "If this report goes to a very, very high level, I would ask someone to proofread it for me. If it's just local management who knows me well and understands what I usually say in my writing, I wouldn't because they already know my style; they already know what to expect from me. But if it's somebody new, I would probably cross check it with somebody…" (Anastasia, TA) "Asking for help from supervisor is a sign of non-competent." (Sue, F) "I have come across a really difficult situation because I have said something or pronounced a word totally different, and people started staring at me… Because maybe they didn't understand me or maybe I said something bad." (Carlos, I)
Workplace expectations (demands, time constraints)	"Once I was working, I realized that the "real world" in English was totally different. It was challenging but made me faster, putting ideas together." (Victor, I) "…communicating through messages and email are more and more popular." (Sue, F) "I can see that I have problems, that I write big emails...I need to be shorter because not everyone has a lot of time, everyone is busy, not everyone has time to spend 10-15 minutes reading my emails." (Marina, TA) "Nowadays workplace communication is mostly in writing." (Anastasia, F) "I learn a lot of new stuff every day, but sometimes it's a little bit--- the workload is too heavy, so I feel a little bit overwhelmed. But generally I like this work." (Sue, I)

Note. I=Interview, TA=Think-aloud, F=Follow-up

Appendix H

Outcomes of Developed Workplace Writing Skills	
Confidence in writing skills (increased comfort level)	"…it took me about, like, three to five years to feel comfortable to write in English, professionally." (Anastasia, I) "Before I was a bit scared due to my limitations, but after a while... Right now, I feel kind of comfortable with it." (Victor, I) "If I think or if I believe that something needs to be changed or if I feel more comfortable or it's my own style, I'm changing that…" (Victor, I) "Personally, at some point I was able to feel that [I was gaining confidence]. I know that I still have to work harder on it, but now things are different." (Victor, F)
Increased confidence in other L2 skills	"Read whatever you come across, any document that is work-related. You will improve a lot your vocabulary. You will improve a lot your writing skills and even when you speak, because you are going to use the vocabulary wherever you work." (Carlos, I)
Achievement of communicative goals	"…that's what I always do. And I think [my strategies are] working. I haven't received any emails saying can you be more explicit…" (Victor, TA) "…I'm good--- I don't have mistakes and my managers are happy with the reports that I provide to them." (Anastasia, I) "…if there's something happened at the border, I need to explain to the customs broker what happened, to correct the problem." (Sue, I) "So during my writing I need to make sure that what I have replied will meet their needs, that I've answered all their questions…because most of the time they have multiple questions… So to make sure everything is good, that it's good enough for them to think about it and make decisions." (Sue, TA)
Sense of belonging ("fit")	"[Writing well] is tremendously important. To properly communicate, inform, make awareness, let people know. But most importantly to be part of a team, to "fit" at work and in any other social group." (Victor, F)
Ability to compete with others	"Language maybe is our weakness and we need to work it in order to overcome it, but we need to show or strengths in order to try to balance and be able to compete in the workplace." (Carlos, F)

Note. I=Interview, TA=Think-aloud, F=Follow-up

Appendix I

Initial Email Invitation (for college students)

E-mail Subject Line: Invitation to Participate in Study of Workplace Writing Experiences

Hello,

My name is Cheryl John. I am a Master of Arts (M.A.) student conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Jia Li in the Faculty of Education at Ontario Tech University. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study on the workplace writing experiences of non-native speakers of English.

The study consists of the following:

Data Collection Method	Estimated Time
Online Questionnaire	15 to 20 minutes
Online One-on-one Interview	25 to 30 minutes
Online Think-aloud Procedure involving a workplace writing task (to be completed immediately after the interview)	25 to 30 minutes (no writing will be required for this procedure)

This study was reviewed and approved by the Ontario Tech University Research Ethics Board (REB File #15457) on October 18, 2019. As the researcher, I will collect and analyze the data in strict accordance with Ontario Tech University research ethics standards. After analysis of the data, the results of the study will be sent to participants who indicate in the questionnaire that they wish to receive the results.

Participation in this study is voluntary, but you may wish to participate for the following reasons. Studies on workplace writing show that employers of both native and non-native speakers of English are generally dissatisfied with the workplace writing skills of their employees. Studies also indicate that non-native speakers of English often feel underprepared to perform workplace writing tasks. In addition, the research shows that workplace writing errors can negatively impact an organization's image and an employee's chances for promotion. Your participation in this research will provide valuable information to help ESL instructors to better prepare non-native speakers of English for real-world writing practices. Also, once the results of this study are shared, you may benefit from learning about the workplace writing challenges and strategies of other non-native speakers of English.

Eligibility Criteria:

You may participate in this study if you meet the following minimum requirements:

- You have at least a CLB 6 in writing (or CELPIP 6, IELTS 5.5, TOEFL 18-20, CEFR B2).
- You have a variety of workplace writing experience in English.

If you meet the minimum requirements based on your responses to the survey questions, you will qualify to complete the online interview and the online think-aloud procedure, scheduled at a time that is convenient for you.

You may withdraw from the study for any reason, and without explanation, up to a maximum of two weeks from the date that the data collection for all participants is completed. If you would like to withdraw from the study, please inform me at cheryl.john@uoit.net . Also, during any part of the study, you may choose to

answer only the questions that you feel comfortable answering. By agreeing to participate, you do not give up any of your legal rights against the researcher or involved institutions.

If you are interested in participating in this study, click on the link below for a consent form and the link to the survey. You may submit the survey by [*due date, allowing three weeks to complete survey*].

[*link to Google Form*]

If you have any questions or concerns related to this project, please contact me at cheryl.john@uoit.net or my supervisor, Dr. Jia Li, at (905) 721-8668 ext. 3708 or at Jia.Li@uoit.ca. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact the Ontario Tech University Research Ethics Office at (905) 721-8668 ext. 3693 or at researchethics@uoit.ca.

Sincerely,

Cheryl John
Master of Arts in Education Candidate
Ontario Tech University

LinkedIn Invitation (for former clients)

Hello [insert first name of recipient],

I'm writing to invite you to participate in my study on the workplace writing experiences of non-native speakers of English. The study consists of a survey, an interview, and a think-aloud activity, all of which will be carried out online and should take about 40 to 60 minutes of your time. You will not be required to do any writing at any time during the study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you would like to participate, click on the link below for more details. You may submit the questionnaire by [*due date, allowing three weeks to complete survey*].

[*link to Google Form*]

This study was reviewed and approved by the Ontario Tech University Research Ethics Board (REB File #15457) on October 18, 2019. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at cheryl.john@uoit.net or my supervisor, Dr. Jia Li, at (905) 721-8668 ext. 3708 or at Jia.Li@uoit.ca. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact the Ontario Tech University Research Ethics Office at (905) 721-8668 ext. 3693 or at researchethics@uoit.ca.

Regards,

Cheryl John
Master of Arts in Education Candidate
Ontario Tech University

Appendix J

E-mail Invitation to Participate in Interview and Think-aloud Procedure

E-mail Subject Line: Invitation to Participate in Study on Workplace Writing Experiences (Interview & Think-aloud)

Hello,

Thank you for submitting your survey. Based on your responses, you are eligible to participate in the second part of the study on the workplace writing experiences of non-native speakers of English. This part of the study consists of an interview and a think-aloud procedure. Please see the chart below for details.

Data Collection Method	Estimated Time
Online one-on-one Interview, audio recorded with permission	25 to 30 minutes
Online Think-aloud Procedure involving a workplace writing task, audio recorded with permission (to be completed immediately after the interview)	25 to 30 minutes (no writing will be required for this procedure)

Participation in this study is voluntary, but you may wish to participate for the following reasons. Studies on workplace writing show that employers of both native and non-native speakers of English are generally dissatisfied with the workplace writing skills of their employees. Studies also indicate that non-native speakers of English often feel underprepared to perform workplace writing tasks. In addition, the research shows that workplace writing errors can negatively impact an organization's image and an employee's chances for promotion. Your participation in this research will provide valuable information to help ESL instructors to better prepare non-native speakers of English for real-world writing practices. Once the results of this study are shared, you may also benefit from learning about the workplace writing challenges and strategies of other non-native speakers of English.

As the researcher, I will collect and analyze the data according to Ontario Tech University research ethics standards. The results of the study will be sent to participants who wish to receive them, after analysis of the collected data.

You may withdraw from the study for any reason, and without explanation, up to a maximum of two weeks from the date that the data collection for all participants is completed. To withdraw from the study at any time, please inform me at cheryl.john@uoit.net, during any part of the study, you may choose to answer only the questions that you feel comfortable answering.

By agreeing to participate, you do not give up any of your legal rights against the researcher or involved institutions.

If you are interested in this opportunity to share more detailed information about your workplace writing experiences, please read the attached consent form and reply with your three choices of preferred dates and times for the interview and the think-aloud procedure.

If you have any questions or concerns related to this project, please contact me at cheryl.john@uoit.net or my supervisor, Dr. Jia Li, at Jia.Li@uoit.ca. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact the Ontario Tech University Research Ethics Office at (905) 721-8668 ext. 3693 or at researchethics@uoit.ca.

Participants are still being recruited for this study. If you know any ESL professionals (living in Canada) who might be interested in participating in this research, please send them the link to the survey [*link to Google Form*] or direct them to contact me for more information at cheryl.john@uoit.net.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Cheryl John
Master of Arts in Education Candidate
University of Ontario Institute of Technology